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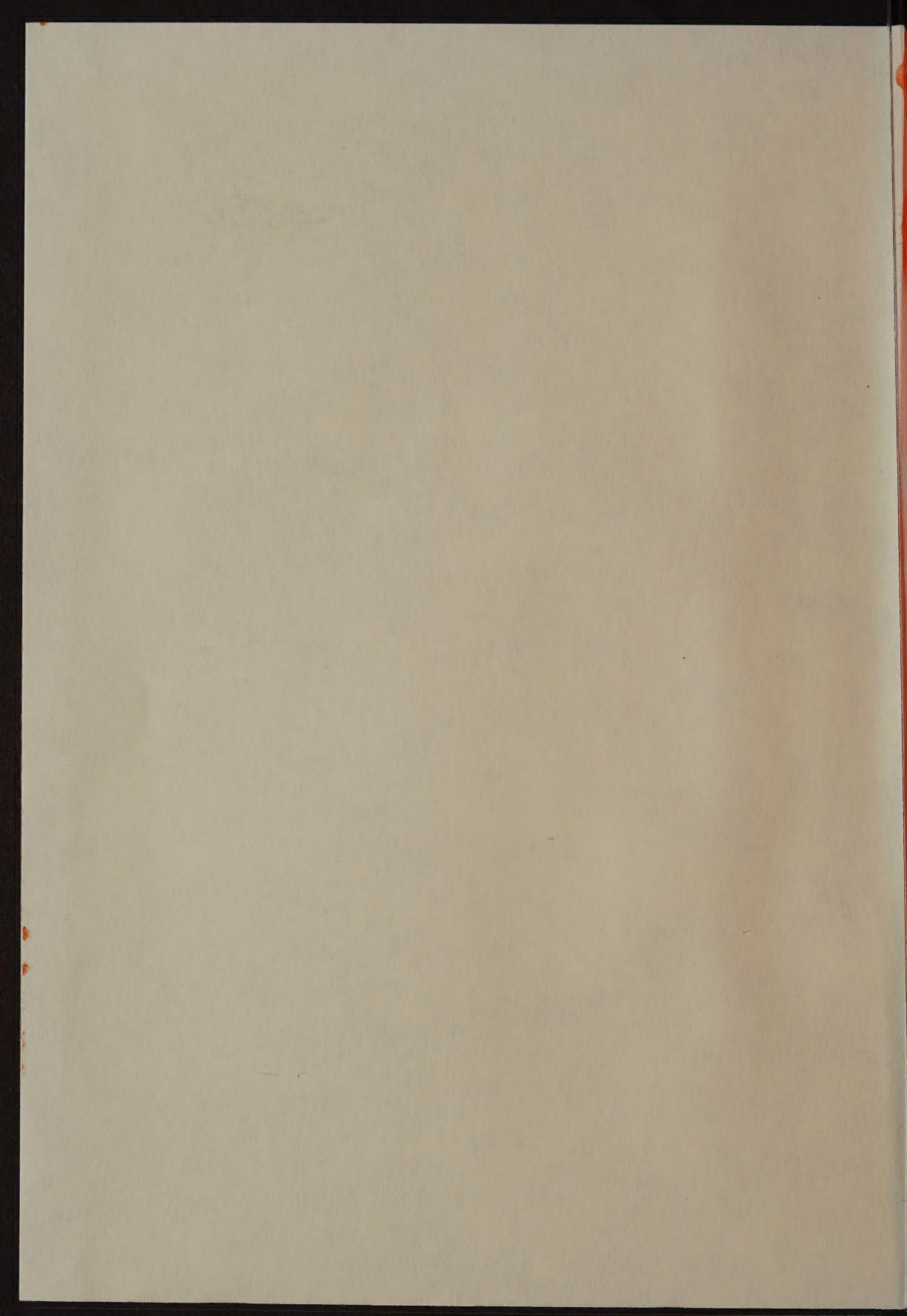
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Moore, Edwin R.

In old Oneonta

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# In Old Oneonta



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Vol. 5, 1969

EDWIN R. MOORE

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GENEALOGY DEPARTMENT

In  
Old  
Oneonta



Vol. 5, 1969

EDWIN R. MOORE

## **DEDICATION**

**With great pride in our past and boundless hope for our future, I offer a debt of gratitude to Ed Moore for invaluable services rendered the residents of our area.**

**Knowledge of our historic past, the stepping stones to the future, is incalculable for us and for generations to come.**

**Ed Moore deserves all of our thanks for enriching today through his devotion to yesterday.**

**Mayor Albert S. Nader  
City of Oneonta**

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## FOREWARD

This Fifth Volume of "In Old Oneonta" is dedicated to the many women, men - yes, and children - who by their comments, in person, by letter or by telephone, have encouraged me to keep writing these vignettes concerning this community and life as it was once lived here.

It has been no easy task to research and write nearly a thousand of these sketches but I believe that I am in the debt of those who have helped and encouraged me and I have wanted to liquidate the obligation.

May God bless my loyal "fans".

Edwin R. Moore

## THE FIRST POSTMASTER

James McDonald felt quite pleased on that summer morning in 1817 with the way his various enterprises were going. His grist and sawmills were doing a land office business and his big frame tavern at the corner of what are now Main and River Streets was full night after night.

What pleased the squire (he was given that title as the most important man in town) in particular was that the night before a government courier had ridden in from Albany with the news that the tiny hamlet was to have a postoffice called Milfordville, which would be located in the McDonald Tavern with the host himself as the postmaster.

When the Oneonta postoffice (the name was changed in 1832) occupied its present quarters in September of 1967 it had been in operation just 150 years in 16 locations and under 21 different postmasters. Postmaster McDonald was the sole employee in 1817 whereas in 1967, 53 men worked under the direction of Postmaster Samuel Bertuzzi.

McDonald never handled a postage stamp nor did the first five of his successors. Although postal service of some kind had existed in the world since the days of Babylon some 3,800 years before Christ, the first government stamp was not issued until 1840 when Great Britain put out the famous "One Penny Black". The stamp did not reach the United States until 1847 when a five cent red brown stamp bearing the likeness of Benjamin Franklin, the first Postmaster General, was supplied to the offices. William Fritts, whose office was in a stone store located just west of the present Brackett's Bookstore, was the first Oneonta postmaster to handle the adhesives.

Stamps were cancelled by hand for many years, the first cancelling machine being installed in 1900 in the Oneonta office, then in the brick block just behind the Hotel Oneonta, during the incumbency of Charles F. Shelland, who headed the office for 20 years, the longest reign of any postmaster. However, this was divided into two periods, from 1889 to 1894 and from 1908 to 1913. Postmaster Bertuzzi holds the record for the longest consecutive term, 19 years.

Until 1888 people had to call at the postoffice for their mail. On April 1 of that year delivery service was inaugurated, the first carriers being Stephen H. Brown, Charles H. Mahon and James Bristol. At that time the office was in the Central Hotel block where the Hotel Oneonta is now, and the postmaster was Harlow E. Bundy, an attorney.

At about this time Harlow Bundy's brother Willard, an inventive genius with apparently little business sense, invented a crude time recorder which the postmaster tested on his small force. Each employee had a special key which, when inserted in the machine, would print a number and the time of day. The tests were successful and soon Harlow Bundy began to manufacture the recorders in a small factory in Binghamton. This was the beginning of IBM.

What is now Oneonta was but a tiny hamlet when the first postoffice was established in 1817, its population probably not exceeding the number of workers in the present postoffice. Most activity centered around the McDonald Tavern and mills near the corner of Main and River. The section on the bluff above where the railroad now runs was beginning to be settled but it would not be until the building of the Charlotte turnpike in 1834 that the higher lying part of the community became its business and residential center.

## A VARIETY OF GOODS

Pianos, cigars and overalls; plows and silk underwear; gloves, whiskey, radios, paint, tables and chairs; storage batteries and health food; locomotives and tin pots and pans; coffee makers, dried beef and men's shirts; egg sorters, silk cloth and fertilizers.

This list covers a wide range of products but at one time or another each has been manufactured in Oneonta in greater or lesser quantity. We have not included the products of the very early days when about everything a person wore, ate or used was made locally. The items we have listed were made here and exported for sale and use elsewhere. Let's take a look at some of them.

From 1887 until 1892 some 20 styles of chairs were manufactured in the buildings at the foot of Rose Avenue now occupied by the Otsego Iron & Metal Company. The McCammon Piano Company located in the buildings in 1892 and for six years turned out about 50 high grade pianos a week. Several are still in use. In 1898 the factory was converted into a mill for the weaving of silk fabrics, an enterprise which lasted for about 30 years.

At a nearby factory on Rose Avenue the Oneonta Table Company turned out 20,000 tables a year from 1885 until the building burned in 1894. There was a fertilizer plant in the East End before the turn of the century and from 1914 to 1922 Sanatogen, a health food, was made in a plant on Reynolds Street. Until it was taken over by the Alien Property custodian during World War I, this was a German owned outfit and was the headquarters of a local spy and sabotage ring, concerning which we have previously written.

For many years Oneonta was a cigar manufacturing center, about a million cigars being hand-rolled each month in several factories. For nearly a century, beginning in 1816, plows and other farm implements were made here in two foundries, one on the Otego Creek near the Country Club and the other on the corner of Broad and Market Streets where the Oneonta Grocery Company building is now.

It was thought once that the manufacture of storage batteries for automobiles and radios would become an important part of Oneonta's economy. The Oneonta Storage Battery Company was organized in 1922 to make the Kalo battery, which used the highly efficient Hobbs Electrolyte. A large brick factory was built on Neahwa Place and for some years the company prospered but then went into a tailspin and was declared bankrupt in 1927.

For some years paint was manufactured in a plant on Market Street, the base being a red, iron-bearing shale quarried on Franklin Mountain. During the early days of radio the Clara-Dyne, developed by Lee Crouch, was made here. It was an excellent instrument and had a wide sale for years.

For some time men's custom made shirts were manufactured in a building which stood on the site of the former Otsego Laundry on Broad Street while tin kitchen utensils were made in the building on the corner of South Main and Prospect now occupied by the Northrup Supply Corporation. A fleet of wagons operated by the firm of Moody & Gould carried the tinware to homes throughout the countryside where it was exchanged for rags in the days when most paper was made from cloth.

During the Age of Steam the D. & H. shops made coal gondolas and box cars and a few locomotives were put together here.

## THE PEDDLER

Ice cream dispensaries, hot dog wagons and other means of carrying a product directly to the consumer are by no means a new way of merchandising, as some people suppose. In fact this method of selling antedated the country store in many parts of the country.

Old as it is, the traveling trade emporium was preceded by the peddler, who went from farm to farm, carrying his stock of goods on his back, in the earliest colonial days. The wagon merchant generally started on foot, walking and hawking until he was able to buy a horse and conveyance.

The peddlers fell into different classes. There was the seller of "Yankee notions" who hawked such items as pins, needles, hooks and eyes, buttons, small hardware, lace and perfume. Then there were the specialized itinerant merchants such as the tin peddler, the clock peddler, the dye peddler and so on.

Most of the early peddlers were from Connecticut, mainly for the reason that most of the articles they sold were manufactured there. They were a shrewd breed and not above a little chicanery, such as purveying wooden nutmegs, oak leaf cigars and realistically painted basswood hams. Connecticut was dubbed the "Nutmeg State" for a very good reason.

Many Americans who later became merchant princes or industrial tycoons got their start as itinerant dealers in small articles. Collis P. Huntington, who went out of Oneonta in 1849 to become one of the great railroad builders, began as a peddler. Starting out of his native Connecticut, he traveled for six years through the South and West, peddling and collecting promissory notes for clock manufacturers. He then set out with his brother Solon, peddling watches and jewelry. Visiting Oneonta, they liked the place and settled here, establishing a country store. Collis later established a branch of this store in Sacramento, California. Solon stayed in Oneonta and became the father of Henry E. Huntington, multimillionaire railroad operator and collector of art and rare books.

The Mendels, the first people of the Jewish faith to become permanent residents of Oneonta, started out selling notions in Otsego, Delaware, Sullivan and Ulster counties. Later they were to establish stores and wholesale houses in Oneonta, Delhi, Peekskill and New York City.

Frank H. Bresee, founder of the Oneonta Department Store, started out as a door to door peddler of Yankee notions. The next step was a small store in his father's home in Hartwick. Larger stores in Hartwick, South Hartwick, New Lisbon, Fly Creek, Schenevus and Sidney followed and in 1899 he came to Oneonta and established the business which now bears his name.

In the early days the peddler's stock was necessarily limited but when he graduated to the horse and wagon stage it extended to all sorts of goods. Large wagons loaded with drygoods, hats, shoes, firearms, clocks and hardware were a familiar sight on country roads.

Oneonta was headquarters for half a century of one of the largest tin peddling businesses in the East, the firm of Moody and Gould, which had branches in Binghamton and Scranton. Tinware, made in a factory at the corner of Prospect and South Main Streets, was traded with farm wives for rags which were sold to paper manufacturers. At one time there were twenty wagons on the road, ranging as far west as Rochester.

## THE ROARING TWENTIES

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness; it was the epoch of faith, it was the epoch of incredulity; it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness; it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair."

Charles Dickens started his "A Tale of Two Cities" with that observation concerning the nature of the years of the French Revolution but if he had lived in a later age he might have written it about the decade in America from 1920 to 1930, the most contradictory, the zaniest, the wackiest ten years in our history. They were the Roaring Twenties, the Jazz Age, the time of Flaming Youth, the Whoopee Years, the Lawless Decade, the Era of Wonderful Nonsense.

Perhaps it was inevitable that the Twenties should be as they were. World War I, with its strains and stresses, was over and the world was at peace, or at least in a state of armistice. Disillusionment and cynicism were in the air. The Noble Experiment, universal prohibition, had started and resentment was building up. The veteran was angry because he thought that something had been sneaked over on him while he was out of the country and people in general did not like the curtailment of their personal liberties by national edict.

It was the decade of the trans-Atlantic Flights of Lindbergh, Byrd and Chamberlin, the decade of the flapper and the Charleston, of dance marathons and flagpole sitters. Gangland wars were in full swing with Al Capone, Dion O'Bannion, Bugs Moran, Dutch Schultz and Legs Diamond stealing the headlines from Presidents Harding and Coolidge.

The female of the species of flaming youth was the flapper, immortalized by artist John Held, Jr. and by novelists F. Scott Fitzgerald and Warner Fabian, better known as Samuel Hopkins Adams. Perhaps you remember the flapper with knee length skirts, rolled down stockings and cloche hat. As for the rest of her attire, Dorothy Parker gave a hint when she quipped that "brevity is the soul of lingerie".

The decade of the '20s was the golden age of sport, the era of Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey, Gene Tunney, Bennie Leonard and Luis Firpo, the Wild Bull of the Pampas. Bill Tilden ruled the male tennis world while Suzanne Lenglen and Helen Wills Moody, Little Miss Poker Face, were the female stars. Bobby Jones was the big man in golf while Red Grange, the Galloping Ghost, and the Four Horsemen of Notre Dame dominated football.

Motion pictures came of age during the decade. Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, Charles Chaplin, Buster Keaton, Lon Chaney, Rudolph Valentino, Clara Bow and Gilbert Roland were just a few of the stars of the period.

It was the age of the popular song, the tuneful Broadway musical and of such revues as the Ziegfeld Follies, George White's Scandals and Earl Carroll's Vanities. Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, Vincent Youmans and George Gershwin were turning out melodies that are still sung and played.

Yes, the Twenties were Roaring, Tumultuous and Wonderfully Nonsensical but all things must come to an end and in September of 1929 the stock market crashed and a beautiful ten-year dream turned into the nightmare of depression.

## ERIE CANAL BROUGHT CHANGES

Technological advances, although of great benefit in the larger picture, always hurt someone, as Oneonta knows all too well. The development of the motor car and the airplane changed the character of railroad operations and completely upset the city's economy. By the same token, the building of the Erie Canal, although the vast importance to New York state, dealt a terrific blow to Otsego County and changed the way of life of its inhabitants.

The first settlers in the county were subsistence farmers and the first industries were the necessary grist and sawmills. With the great influx of people from New England following the Revolution, small-scale industry made an appearance and during the 30 years from 1800 it grew rapidly.

There was an abundance of water power and such raw materials as wood, grain and wool were present in large quantities. The improving highway system and the waters of the Susquehanna gave the necessary transportation facilities.

By the time the Erie Canal made its impact felt there were ten cotton mills in the county, over 500 sawmills, about 80 gristmills and around 20 distilleries. Nearly every community had a cloth-finishing factory, a tannery and an ashery. There were several foundries and a variety of other small industries.

Early in the century Judge William Cooper had prophesied the building of the canal when he wrote: "Of its practicability, there can be no doubt, whilst the world has as yet produced no work so noble; nor has the universe such another situation to improve. Its obvious utility will hereafter challenge more attention; men of great minds will turn their thoughts and devote their energies to its accomplishment, and I doubt not that it will one day be achieved."

In 1825 the Erie Canal was opened for traffic and the cost of shipping a ton of goods from Buffalo to New York was reduced from a hundred dollars to ten, and the time from about 20 days to eight. So cheap did transportation become that agriculture in Otsego County suffered greatly from western competition.

Merchants who dealt in agricultural products were hard hit. The big freight wagons began to disappear from the turnpikes since shipment by water was so much cheaper.

The scores of small industries began to disappear as transportation to and from the outside world became easier and less expensive. In some instances the change was gradual but by the end of the Civil War Otsego had ceased to be an industrial county.

Citizens of the county tried to fight back and a proposal was made to build an artificial watercourse from the Mohawk Valley to Otsego Lake and thence down the Susquehanna. Jacob Dietz of Oneonta and Isaac Hayes of Unadilla were prime movers in this project, which was soon abandoned as a political impossibility.

Unable to meet the growing competition of the Middle West in the marketing of grain and wool, Otsego County farmers turned to dairy products and to the growing of hops.

The making of butter and cheese (fluid milk would not be sold on a wide scale until well into the 20th century) began to assume considerable proportions while the growing and marketing of hops grew to the point where Otsego County became the premier hop producing area in the United States.

## AS IT WAS IN 1840

As John Townsman stood on the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets one cold morning in January of 1840 and looked about him, he thought of the changes that had taken place since he had come to the tiny hamlet from Connecticut ten years before. Oneonta was still small with not even the distinction of being an incorporated village, but it was considerably larger than it had been a decade before and there was promise of future growth.

The year 1834 had been a memorable one for Oneonta (the name had been changed from Milfordville when the township was created in 1830) since it had witnessed the opening of the Charlotte Turnpike, which brought to the community traffic which had previously bypassed it over the Catskill Turnpike. Stores and small industries had sprung up and several new houses had been built. Furthermore, the location of the turnpike, whose route was along Main and Chestnut Streets, meant that the business section, hitherto clustered around the McDonald mills and tavern at the corner of Main and River, would move up on the bluff.

An examination of the pages of the Oneonta Weekly Herald for 1840 shows what businesses were in existence in that time over a century and a quarter ago. Although the population was only about 200, there were four hotels, all of them busy with the flood of transient traffic coming over the turnpike. The Oneonta and Otsego Houses stood on opposite corners of Chestnut and Main, MacDonald's Tavern was on the corner of Main and River and Walling's Tavern was where the United Presbyterian Church is now.

There were two physicians, Dr. Joseph Lindsay, who came in 1808 from Cherry Valley, and Dr. Samuel Case, who settled here in 1829. There were two churches, the graceful white, frame Presbyterian on the site of the present church, and the First Baptist on the slope of Grove Street facing Main. The school stood on the present corner of Broad and Main in January of 1840 but later that year a two story frame school was erected on Grove Street opposite the church sheds.

There were two attorneys, E. Cook whose office was on the site of the Building and Loan and John B. Steele. The latter was a brother of Osmon Steele, deputy sheriff of Delaware County whose slaying near Andes started the Anti-Rent War and brought martial law to the county.

E.R. Ford still had his general store on the north-west corner of Main and River but his fine stone mansion on the Wilber Bank site and his stone store on the present corner of Main and Broad were nearly finished and he would move uptown later in 1840.

There were three other general stores, a furniture factory and shop, a paint store, a cooperage, a wagon and carriage maker, a shoe store and a manufacturer of tin, sheet iron and copper ware. W.W. Snow had a wool carding and cloth finishing establishment on Main Street below the McDonald mill and Mason Gilbert made hats in a house still standing at 27 Main Street.

Potter Burton had a jewelry and clock shop. Later he would have as an employee a man whose inventions would have impact upon the lives of all of us for it was Charles Edgar Fritts who invented, long before there was any practical use for it, a device for photographing sound, transmitting it electrically and then playing it back. The talking motion picture and the tape recorder resulted from his basic patents.

## THE LOG CABIN

Topping a bay window in the old Wilber Mansion on Ford Avenue is a stained glass panel depicting a log cabin and bearing the legend, "Birthplace of George I. Wilber, 1845." The "I" appears as a human eye.

The famous banker, who dominated many phases of activity in Oneonta for years, was not one to decry his humble beginnings. He actually was born and reared in a log cabin on Crumhorn Mountain and he was inordinately proud of that fact.

To make sure that the general public knew that the head of the Wilber National Bank had pulled himself up by his boot straps, George I. had a drawing of his log cabin birthplace printed on the checks, notes and other paper used by the bank. One day a check came back with this written across its face: "Christ was born in a manger." In a moment of humility Wilber decreed that henceforth the institution's paper would be free of illustrations.

If George I. Wilber was happy over having first seen the light of day in one of the symbols of pioneer America, so were thousands of other distinguished persons and some of them made good use of the fact. In the presidential race of 1840 Martin Van Buren, an aristocrat who was thoroughly accustomed to the good things of life, stood not a chance against William Henry Harrison and his "log cabin and cider" campaign.

The first dwelling in what is now the town of Oneonta was a log cabin erected in the Plains section by Henry Scramling in 1773 and the first house in the present city of Oneonta was a similar structure built by John VanDerwerker in 1775. Its site is marked by a monument just inside the main entrance to Neahwa Park. Until about 1800 all of the dwellings in Oneonta were log cabins, the first frame building being the home of Frederick Brown on the site of the Wilber Bank.

In all of pioneer America, except New England and Virginia, the first houses were log cabins. About the only implements which the earliest settlers brought into the wilderness were a rifle and an axe. Working without saws, hammers, nails, pegs or plaster, the pioneer could build quickly, using only an axe, a house that was warm and dry. When sawmills came into being he would construct a larger and more convenient frame dwelling.

Persistent belief to the contrary notwithstanding, the Pilgrims and Puritans and those who founded the Jamestown colony did not erect log cabins despite the fact that it was the most suitable home yet devised for pioneering people. The first colonists were English and the frame house was the only kind they had ever known. Until boards for frame houses were available, they lived, at Plymouth and at Jamestown, in what were called English wigwams, which were a cross between the hut of the Welsh miner and the true American Indian wigwam.

The log cabin's first appearance in North America was in 1638 when members of the Swedish West Indies Company set up a trading post and village on the shore of Delaware Bay. It was the Scots-Irish, who began arriving in great numbers after 1718, who spread the Scandinavian cabin far and wide.

By the time of Lexington and Concord the log cabin, substantially as we know it today, was the classic dwelling of the American frontier and was well on its way to becoming an almost sacred American tradition.

## FAMED HOTEL GOODYEAR

What to do on a Sunday afternoon in the first years of the century? The obvious thing was to go home after church, partake of a heavy dinner and then spend the hours snoozing in a hammock on the front porch. There were few automobiles so a ride in the country was unlikely. Golf was unheard of and there was no Sunday baseball, no radio and no TV.

There was one thing you could do, however, and lots of Oneontans did it; take a D. & H. train to Colliersville, enjoy a wonderful meal at the Hotel Goodyear and spend the afternoon on the wide porches of the famed hostelry or strolling about the tree studded lawn. You could get there before noon and have several hours of enjoyment before the train left for Oneonta about six o'clock.

A half century and more ago Colliersville was a delightful little village dominated by the big Goodyear Hotel, now only a memory, and by the beautiful Goodyear residence, now Lorenzo's Homestead. Scores of enormous trees provided ample shade on the wide lawns.

Colliersville (that's the postoffice; the railroad station was known as Colliers) was founded by Isaac Collier, of Palatine stock, who was the first settler in the region, coming in directly after the Revolution. Upon his death his extensive land holdings went to his son Peter, who built in 1816 the beautiful dwelling which, altered beyond recognition, still stands on the corner of the Cooperstown road.

Peter Collier conducted there for years one of the most famous post road taverns in this part of the state. It once held an enormous fireplace flanked by Dutch ovens which (most regrettably), was torn out when the place was first remodeled as a restaurant in 1929.

Jared Goodyear, born in Connecticut, married Colliers' daughter, Ann Eliza, in 1822 and entered into a partnership with his father-in-law which was to make Goodyear the wealthiest man in the county in his time. The firm of Collier and Goodyear ran the tavern, engaged in extensive mercantile and agricultural pursuits and did a big logging business down the river to Baltimore.

The firm built a dam across the Susquehanna about where the present Collier's Dam stands and erected saw and gristmills. The timber for the picturesque covered bridge which for many years spanned the river just beyond the hamlet came from the sawmill.

Jared Goodyear was a prime mover in the building of the Albany & Susquehanna Railroad, now the Delaware & Hudson, and nearly succeeded in having the shops located at Colliers, which would have made that community, instead of Oneonta, the metropolis of the valley.

Goodyear built the big hotel in 1867 and for years it was a leading hostelry. Wide verandas flanked it on two sides and it faced a grove of beautiful trees on the east. George Glazier was the proprietor when we remember it best. When Colliers Dam was constructed in 1907 the engineers and foremen lived there.

The Goodyear homestead was occupied for years by Goodyear's granddaughter, Ella Lyman. She died in 1924 and the property passed out of the family which had owned it for over a century.

## MELICK THE FIXER

If Erv Melick couldn't fix it, your shotgun or your violin, your lock, your lawnmower or whatever, was undoubtedly beyond repair. That was the reputation for over half a century of Oneonta's foremost "tinkerer" and it was fully earned and richly deserved.

From 1879 until his death in 1936 at the age of 82, Ervin Melick was one of the community's best known and most useful citizens. He was a saw-fitter and a locksmith, a gunsmith and a watchmaker, an expert repairer and maker of musical instruments as well as being a competent auto and general mechanic. And, in addition, he could play a fiddle like nobody's business.

Erv Melick was born in 1854 in the town of Carlisle, Schoharie county. His mother died when he was a lad and he was sent to Detroit to live with an uncle. Here he learned the saw-fitters trade, an essential occupation in the old days.

From Detroit he went to Philadelphia where he served an apprenticeship with a watchmaker. In 1879 the young artisan came to Oneonta, which would be his home for the next 57 years, and opened a shop at the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets where he repaired clocks, sharpened saws and started his career of fixing about anything that wouldn't work.

Melick was soon appointed caretaker of the Stanton Opera House as well as janitor of two of the village's hose companies. Firemen paraded frequently in that period, always taking their apparatus with them, and it was Melick's job to keep the trucks in immaculate condition. Upon one occasion one of the companies won a prize at a firemen's convention in Albany for the best appearing apparatus and it was Melick who had supervised the loading of the hose cart on a D. & H. flatcar and had rendered it spotless when it reached its destination.

When we first remember Erv Melick his shop and residence were in an ancient wooden building on Water Street back of what is now the Bern Furniture store. Inside was incredible chaos and confusion - to a customer but not to Erv Melick who knew where every tool and machine was although it was seemingly covered by the accumulated debris of decades.

Hanging on the walls were musical instruments of every description - violins, banjos, guitars and mandolins, horns and drums, all there for repair. Melick also made violins, turning out about a dozen excellent instruments a year. Once a lady brought in for repair a violin which had cost \$1,000. After he had fixed it, Erv made an exact duplicate in appearance and tone which completely fooled the good lady upon her return to the shop. She thought that the counterfeit violin was her own until Melick explained the situation.

Erv Melick was an old time fiddler of wide reputation, playing frequently at dances and hoe downs. Once he won a fiddling contest at the Oneonta Theatre and was offered \$50 a week to play the Smalley and Schine circuits. He turned the offer down, preferring his accustomed routine of work and play.

He was an expert with safes and many a business man who had lost the combination to his strongbox had it opened by reason of Melick's sensitive fingers and keen ear. The only safe which baffled him for any length of time was an unlocked one.

Erv Melick was truly a jack of all trades, but, fortunately for Oneontans, he was the master of each one he worked at.

As the years march by, a street changes more than just in physical appearance. Its whole character alters as familiar names disappear from the signs and their owners walk away into memory. It's the same street and yet it isn't.

We thought of this the other day as we strolled through Oneonta's business section. It wasn't so much that there were several new buildings and that the appearance of others had drastically changed since our boyhood. There was a different atmosphere, a different mood.

Most of the names on store fronts had changed, leaving only memories of the men who ran the shops when we were young. There are a few of the familiar names, among them Bresee, for the Oneonta Department Store was there in our youth, much smaller then but growing all the time. And there is Stevens, a name which has been associated with the hardware business ever since we can remember. Baker is another old hardware name, although the store was not in its present location when we were a lad.

We can just remember when Russell Brigham opened his jewelry store in the Wooden Row, across the street from the firm's present location. Sisson's is one of the oldest stores on the street although now under different ownership. Keenan is another old Oneonta business name. In our youth, however, M.G. Keenan, father of Stuart, sold more mileage books than insurance. L.P. Butts is another old concern run by a descendant of the founder.

There are a few stores which, although the names have changed, trace their lineage to concerns established many years ago. Henderson's stems directly back to Bennett & Carr, founded in 1884. Brackett's is a direct descendant of the Henry Saunders bookstore, started in 1870. The City Drugstore (now no more), although there have been several changes in ownership and in location, goes back in an unbroken line to the drugstore of our father, George E. Moore, which was opened in 1884.

There has been quite a change in the nature of retail establishments since our boyhood. Then the drygood store was in vogue. Ready-to-wear ladies' clothing was virtually unknown and when your mother wanted a new dress she purchased the material at a drygoods store and had a dressmaker fashion the garment. L.E. Wilder & Son, Ronan Brothers, M. Gurney & Sons, B.F. Sisson and the Department Store were the drygoods stores of the period. Gurneys also did a big carpet business, for that was the time when wall-to-wall carpeting was the rule and hardwood floors the exception.

The "chain" store did not come to Oneonta until 1912 when Woolworth opened a small section of its present location. In this connection it might be noted that B.F. Sisson was in partnership with F.W. Woolworth at one time in a general store in Watertown but got out of the firm when Woolworth persisted in the crazy idea of starting a series of five and ten cent stores.

There was a Grand Union Tea Company store here some years before Woolworth came but it was a vastly different enterprise from the great grocery emporiums of today. Only tea, coffee and spices were sold, with coupons, similar to the trading stamps of today, a part of the deal. Wagons peddled the merchandise throughout the countryside.

Gone are the many grocery store and meat markets which once dotted Main Street. Hidden in memory are the names of such grocers as Corey Borst, Fred Dibble, George Winans, Laverne Palmer and Terrell & Campbell and butchers like Rufus Torrey, John Brandow, Billy Williams, Joe Hendy, Dickinson and Chicorelli.

## A POLITICAL SCANDAL

The Case of the Missing Payroll Records, or Who Pilfered the Proof, made absorbing reading for Oneontans back in October of 1911. There was a municipal election campaign going on and wild charges were being thrown back and forth by the two weekly newspapers, the strongly Republican Oneonta Herald and the equally partisan Democratic Oneonta Press.

Andrew B. Saxton, editor of the Herald, was a master craftsman in the use of words and Chester A. Miller guiding genius of the Press, was also perfectly at home in the verbiage business. The Star, an independent daily, kept out of the fracas, simply endorsing the Republican slate.

Oneonta became a city on January 1, 1909, with Albert Morris, a Republican, as the first mayor and with a Common Council composed of three Democrats and three Republicans. All went well at first. A paving program for Main and Chestnut Streets was put into effect with everyone cooperating. The honeymoon ended in the summer of 1911 when the two parties announced their slates of candidates for the November elections.

The Democrats chose Attorney George L. Gibbs as their perennial candidate while the Republicans named Frank D. Blodgett, professor of ancient languages at the State Normal School. Things started to heat up and soon the political pot was boiling merrily. Mr. Gibbs had a few things to say but Professor Blodgett stirred the unsavory mess with a long handled spoon, getting not a drop upon himself.

The Alderman from the Fifth Ward, Merlin J. Platt who was running for re-election, started the donnybrook by claiming that the paving contracts had been awarded without competitive bidding in violation of charter provisions, and that the bond issue to pay for the work was therefore illegal. His attention was promptly called to the fact that the charter provided that if the Common Council concurred, contracts could be let without bidding; that such concurrence had been voted and that Platt himself had made the motion.

In view of the record there wasn't much the alderman could say to this so he started off on another tack and charged that the paving had been improperly done. The Republican rebuttal was that Platt had been on the Council during the course of the work and had never once lifted his voice in criticism. It was also said that he had been on the paving crew himself and had received pay from the city although he was an alderman, thus creating a conflict of interest.

"Prove it," said Platt and that is when the plot of "The Case of the Missing Payroll Records" began to thicken. The records could not be found. The City Clerk remembered putting them in his safe and City Engineer Orson Miller swore that they were there when he verified the fact that the alderman had been employed on the paving gang at the munificent wage of 20 cents an hour.

The Herald and the Press carried on the fight, giving the matter almost full page coverage each week. And then came the election and the Republican position was apparently vindicated. A majority of citizens voted under the "big chicken" and only one Democratic alderman survived the landslide. It wasn't the one from the Fifth Ward.

## ONEONTA GORGE

Although they were twin brothers the two Indian warriors were bitter rivals for the hand of Oneonta, the tribal chief's favorite daughter. The Great Spirit, watching the contest from on high and fearing that the brothers would fight to the death, waited until they were some distance apart and then created a titanic cleft in the rocks, hundreds of feet deep, between them. The spot has been called Oneonta Gorge ever since, according to the Indian legend.

Beautiful Oneonta Gorge, visited annually by thousands of tourists is in Multnomah County, Oregon, on the Columbia River about 35 miles east of Portland. A sparkling creek which cut the gorge through countless ages, runs through the canyon on its way to the Columbia.

Moss and ferns cling to the precipitous and towering walls and here and there can be seen parts of fossilized trees, trapped by a lava flow millions of years ago. At the head of the gorge is the breath-taking Oneonta Falls.

You may believe the Indian tale if you choose, but Lewis A. McArthur has another story to tell in his "Oregon Geographic Names".

"The origin of this name is obviously the place in New York. The compiler has not been able to find out why the name was applied to the gorge in Oregon. Oneonta is said by Bennett to mean 'place of peace'.

A handsome steamboat of the Mississippi River side-wheel type was built at Cascades in 1863 and named the 'Oneonta'. She was operated by the Oregon Steam Navigation Company on the Columbia River until 1877, both above and below the Cascades. While the evidence is by no means conclusive, it seems probable that Oneonta Gorge was named after the steamboat was built, and it is possible that the geographic feature was named because of some incident connected with the boat."

In the issue of the Sunday Oregonian dated January 22, 1967, appeared a full page of pictures taken in the Columbia River valley in the 1860s by Carleton E. Watkins of San Francisco, a native Oneontan and one of the world's greatest scenic photographers. Among the pictures was one of Oneonta Gorge. It is quite possible that Watkins was responsible for the application of the name of his home town to both the boat and the bit of scenic splendor.

On the other hand, Collis P. Huntington's private cars were called the Oneonta I and Oneonta II and since they traveled wherever there was a railroad and were probably seen in Oregon, it is possible that they might have been the inspiration for the name.

Carleton Emmons Watkins had a fabulous career as a photographer. Born in his father's hotel in Oneonta in 1829, he went to California with Collis Huntington in 1849. He mastered the difficult art of wet-plate photography and spent most of his life preserving for posterity the great sights of the West. He was the first to photograph the giant redwoods in Mariposa Grove. The Yosemite Valley, the Columbia River country, the Comstock and Anaconda mines, the Franciscan Missions - all were immortalized through pictures by him.

Mount Watkins, the peak which is magnificently reflected in Yosemite National Park, is named after this former Oneontan.

## THE USES OF WATER

"Everywhere water is a thing of beauty; gleaming in the dewdrop; singing in the summer rain; shining in the ice-gems till the leaves all seem to turn to living jewels; spreading a golden veil over the setting sun; or a white gauze around the midnight moon."

To the pioneer, water had a different kind of beauty than that described by John G. Gough; it had the placid beauty of utility. Without water the early settler could not have entered the wilderness, let along conquer it.

In a new country water was essential as a transportation medium and the Susquehanna and its tributaries were waterways by which much of New York State could be reached. Beginning as early as 1614, explorers, missionaries, traders, surveyors, soldiers and pioneers used the river in the absence of better transportation routes.

During the post-Revolutionary period when the land was being cleared of timber, rafts of lumber were sent down the river to Baltimore and way points and later "arks" carried farm produce down the crooked waterway.

The many tributary streams, all of them carrying more water than they do today, and the hilly nature of Otsego's terrain made for an abundance of water power, which turned the wheels of hundreds of gristmills, sawmills, cotton factories and other industries. About every village had a number of small shops turning out products, mostly for local consumption, and nearly all operated by water power.

Silver Creek is an example. This gentle stream which now flows lazily through the city, once powered a gristmill, a woodworking shop, a foundry, four sawmills and a cloth finishing plant as well as furnishing the water for a distillery. Oneonta Creek once supplied the power for a foundry and four or five sawmills and the water for a tannery.

There were once 11 cotton mills in Otsego county, turning out annually three and a half million yards of calico, gingham and percale. Why did these enterprises locate in this section, so far from the sources of raw materials? The answer is that the county had an abundance of water power and hundreds of men, women and children who were willing to work long hours for small pay.

The mills at Toddsville, Oaksville, Fork Shop and Hope Factory drew water from Oaks Creek while those at Clintonville and Phoenix used the Susquehanna as a source of power. The plants at Morris and Gilbertsville took their water from the Butternut Creek.

At Burlington Flats and Pittsfield the mills were on Wharton Creek while the one at Laurens was on the stream which drains Gilbert Lake. This was the last cotton mill to be built in the county and older residents remember the big stone building topped by a gold cupola.

For over half a century the hydro-electric plant on Electric Lake (now a wilderness of second-growth trees, bushes and stagnant pools but once 50 acres of shining water) supplied most of the electricity for Oneonta.

Water as an economic factor in Otsego county, except as it attracts pleasure seekers, is now practically nil. To the best of our knowledge water power is used only at Colliers Dam and there only occasionally, in times of peak demand.

## A GOOD PLACE TO STAY

As the drover, his cattle corralled and his horse stabled, approached the door of the tavern he sensed that the place was crowded and that he would probably have to sleep on the floor in the public room. A big stagecoach stood in the stable yard and flanking it were several large freight wagons and a Conestoga immigrant vehicle. Their occupants had undoubtedly reserved all the beds. The sounds of laughter and loud conversation spilled into the night with the yellow light from the windows.

The extra effort he had put into the last few miles was worthwhile, however, for this was the famous Emmons Tavern and the man knew that the excellent food, the good drink and the warmth and companionship he would find within would compensate for the long hours he had spent in the saddle, keeping his herd of cattle moving along the dusty, crowded Charlotte Turnpike.

The time was about 1845, before the railroad had come through and when the Charlotte Turnpike, branching off the Catskill Turnpike at Harpersfield and going down the Charlotte and Susquehanna valleys, was the arterial highway of the region.

The Emmons Tavern, which stood near where the Emmons Manor House now is, was built about 1817 by Jacob Young, who had settled soon after the Revolution across the river near what is now the F. & F. Airport. It was run for some years by his son James and then by a succession of landlords named White, Arnold and Fairchild.

About 1840 the property was purchased by Carlton Emmons, a son of Asa Emmons, an early settler on Southside. Carlton and his brother Roderick had opened the hostelry at the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets which later became the Susquehanna House.

Emmons enlarged the building and under his management the inn became one of the most famous in this part of the state. It was always crowded with stagecoach passengers and teamsters and drovers on their way to the nearest railhead at Fort Plain or in the Hudson Valley.

With the advent of the railroad in 1865, a bustling little community sprang up, with two hotels, a general store, a railroad station and a cluster of houses. Nineteen towns in Delaware county made Emmons their shipping station. Gradually, as other railroads were built, the trade went elsewhere and when the railroad station was abandoned in 1872 the little village languished and died.

The Emmons Tavern remained, however, but under different management, for Carlton Emmons had retired to his nearby farm some years before. During the last years before it burned in 1886, the inn had fallen into disrepute. Said the Oneonta Herald in its account of the blaze: "The hotel has been frequently infested with a gang of Ishmaelites from Alliger Hill and Hittites from Baker Hill whose delight it has been to saturate themselves with fuel oil from the bar and then indulge in a free fight all around."

There were those at the time, however, who remembered the days of glory of the ancient tavern and who hoped that its ashes would rest in peace.

## CREEKS WERE IMPORTANT

The creeks which course through the city, carrying drainage waters from the northern hills to the river, were a mighty influence in the early development of the community. Not only did their waters turn the wheels of a score of mills, but in time of flood they altered the topography of the region and even changed the course of the Susquehanna. It is the latter stream that we worry about today but the creeks were the instruments of havoc in the past.

Of the three streams which traverse the community, Glenwood Creek at East End has been of the least importance. Rising in the Gifford Hill section, it comes down the ravine by the side of Glenwood Cemetery, crosses under Main between Rose and Forest Avenues and continues southwest to the river.

In the ravine through which the creek flows was once an amusement area, Wilber Park, designed to serve the patrons of the first street railway in Oneonta. To our knowledge this stream has never been used for water power but near its banks once stood a post tavern, erected in 1809 by Baltus Kimball.

The Oneonta Creek flows from the reservoir system down the East Street valley and through the present Wilber Park, continuing its course beside Pine Street and entering the millrace near the end of Liberty Street. Prior to 1816 this stream crossed Main approximately where the American Legion Home stands.

In that year occurred one of the town's worst floods, which changed the course of both the creek and the river. Prior to then the Susquehanna flowed close to the Grand Street bluff. At about where Gas Avenue is now, the stream turned abruptly south, ran past the ball park site and found its present channel near the Park Board workshed.

A cloudburst on the creek watershed caused the stream to rise rapidly. At that time the land to the south and east of Main Street was high except where the creek pierced it. The rampaging stream washed hundreds of tons of gravel from these high lands and carried it to the river, completely blocking the old channel and effecting a change of course to about its present bed. The creek worked its way several rods to the west during this flood.

Oneonta Creek once supplied water for a tannery which stood about back of the Legion; for a complex of small mills at the present corner of Main and Pine; and for a gristmill and five sawmills in the East Street valley.

Oneonta virtually owes its existence to Silver Creek, since this presently placid stream furnished the power for the mills which James McDonald built near the present corner of Main and River Streets and around which the village grew. The creek rises beyond the end of West Street and cuts through the heart of the city, emptying into the millrace near the foot of South Main Street.

Prior to 1865 Silver Creek, after it had crossed Main Street near the postoffice, swung to the west and followed the bluff upon which Main Street rests to Chestnut Street, where it turned south, entering the river a few rods above the mouth of the present tailrace. Its course was changed when the Market Street area was drained.

Silver Creek once supplied water power for two gristmills, two sawmills, a machine shop, a cloth finishing plant and a distillery. During the years it has overflowed its banks many times, causing heavy damage to the residential and business sections.

## A WEEK IN '25

It was a normal week in a normal year. By September of 1925 World War I was only a bad memory and the depression of the early '20s had been overcome. Business was starting to boom and there was a feeling of satisfaction, and complacency, in the air.

The Ku Klux Klan had reared its ugly head but no one took the movement too seriously. Oneonta had always been a tolerant town and if a few nightshirted kooks wanted to make fools of themselves, so be it.

The Klan did some things that were out of character. For instance, in that first week of September, 50 members of the hooded order attended a service of the Anna Memorial African Methodist Church on Hunt Street, listened quietly to the sermon and then presented the pastor with a purse of \$33.47.

Oneonta High School was starting football again after a lapse of many years and 30 boys were working out under the direction of Head Coach Al Risedorph and his assistant, Shorty Long. Among the aspirants were Wilmer Bresee, Dunc Briggs, Wes Hoffman, Art Edmunds, Fran Delaney, Jimmy Imhoff, Bob Simmons, Ken Bates, Sam Timko, Walt Keene and Cecil Fowlston. Five games had been scheduled, two with Cooperstown and one each with Norwich, Walton and Unadilla.

The presence of the automobile was beginning to be felt. A count showed that between 4:30 and 5:30 of a certain afternoon 755 motor cars from 11 states passed the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets. The Ford people had come out with a brand new car, the Model A, and the only one east of Buffalo was on display in the window of the Oneonta Sales Company, which had 110 orders on file for the new car.

There was a coal strike on and 84 train service men had been laid off by the D. & H. This action did not affect the car shops, which were at work building a new type of passenger coach, the "turtle-back", which had a steel-ribbed roof of semi-circular shape, thermostatic controlled heat and many safety features. The work was in charge of A. G. Ditmore, division car foreman. Frank Clark was the foreman of coach work, James Hurley was responsible for upholstery and Edward Hewel was the paint foreman.

Five hundred members of the antlered herd attended the Elks clambake at Pine Lake and disposed of vast quantities of food. Frank Sherman was the bakemaster, assisted by Albert Morse. Keeton's band played and sang until, its notes becoming sour late in the afternoon, it was dispersed by a flying wedge composed of Spec Tarbox, Al Ingerham, Dutch Damaschke, Tommy Wilcox and Ed Lutsey.

Fifty sons of Masons and their friends became members as Templar Chapter, Order of DeMolay, was installed. Among the first officers were Walter Keene, Robert Hall, Stuart Bunn, Gerald Terpenning, Wesley Hoffman, Arthur Edmunds, Donald Estabrook, Wirt Lewis and Cecil Fowlston.

The Upstate Baptist Home at Milford Center was dedicated that week and bids were advertised for the Oneonta-Meridale highway over Franklin Mountain.

It was a good, satisfying week, like many others that had gone before and many more to come.

## A TOONERVILLE RAILROAD

Mingled with the waters of the big Pepacton reservoir on the east branch of the Delaware River above Downsville are many memories of a once prosperous country-side, of bustling towns and of a Toonerville Trolley sort of railroad - the Delaware & Northern, which ran its banged-up locomotives and flimsy cars from Arkville to East Branch for 35 years.

The line was abandoned by its then owners, the New York Central Railroad, in 1941 but it could not have lasted much longer in any event for practically all of its 37.52 miles of roadbed was in the basin marked for inundation by the waters of the huge New York City water supply reservoir.

The railroad, first called the Delaware & Eastern, was built by a group of Pittsburgh financiers to move the bluestone and lumber which were among Delaware county's principal exports at the time. It began operating on October 23, 1906, with the main line running from Arkville, where it connected with the Ulster & Delaware, to East Branch, where it joined the O.&W. a 12-mile branch line climbed from Dunraven to Andes.

The 14 stations on the main line were East Branch, Harvard, Shinhopple, Gregorytown, Colchester, Pepacton, Downsville, Shavertown, Union Grove, Arena, Halls Bridge, Dunraven, Margaretville and Arkville. On the branch line were Dunraven, Kaufmans, Pleasant Valley and Andes. The sites of most of these communities are now far below the surface of the reservoir.

The opening of a railroad through this section was a somewhat daring venture since the route paralleled the foothills of the Catskills and ran very close to the east branch of the Delaware river. To span the multitude of streams flowing into the river, 31 bridges had to be built, one for nearly every mile of line.

The railroad started with three second hand locomotives and a few passenger and freight cars, also much the worse for wear. It soon became evident that the road was shoddily built. There were frequent cave-ins and landslides, and a shovel was standard equipment for every train service man. Wrecks were all a part of the day's work but, miraculously, there was little loss of life.

The line went bankrupt in 1908 and was reorganized as the Delaware & Northern Railroad. The financing this time was a little more substantial but the road continued to use second hand equipment and its troubles were far from over.

The fortunes of the railroad were tied in with the economy of Delaware county and when lumbering and stone quarrying declined almost to the vanishing point, the business of the line followed suit. Trains continued to labor over the trembling rails but with few passengers and little freight.

In the '30s it became clear that something had to be done. The old engines could be helped but little in the shops at Margaretville, the cars were falling apart and the roadbed became in worse shape each day. Some of the locomotives were junked and several gasoline driven combination cars were bought to take care of the few passengers, the mail and what freight was left.

The road struggled along until 1941 when it was purchased by the New York Central. It was hoped that the Central would put the road back on its feet but instead the entire line was soon abandoned and the rails and rolling stock sold for scrap.

## TOUR OF OTSEGO

"We came 3 miles before Dinner thro a good Soil tolerably level and near Half the Way is low ground proper for Meadow, well timbered with Beech, Sugar Maple, Wild Cherry, Ash, a few blue Oaks and several groves of Hemloc, but no Hiccor or Pine. Same of the Hellibore is two feet high. We saw two Garter Snakes and one of our savages snapt his Gun at 4 Wolves. We skirted a beautiful Lake Half a Mile long and a Quarter of a Mile wide, surrounded with gently rolling Hills; it disemboogues in a placid stream and presents a most fit spot for Water Works."

These words, set down in the journal of Richard Smith during his tour of the Otego Patent in 1769, describe what we now know as Gilbert Lake. Smith, who held an interest in the Patent, which was granted following the establishment of the Fort Stanwix Treaty Line, was undoubtedly the first white man to see Gilbert Lake as well as the first of his race to visit several other portions of Otsego county.

Richard Smith's travels are set forth in a rare book, "The Tour of Four Great Rivers", edited by Francis Halsey of Unadilla and published in 1906. The four streams are the Susquehanna, the Delaware, the Hudson and the Mohawk. Smith saw these valleys when the Indians still traversed the trails, which had been worn deep by the feet of their forefathers, and when the bark canoe was still a necessary adjunct to frontier travel and trade.

Smith and his party of surveyors and Indian guides went by road from Cherry Valley to the head of Otsego Lake and down that body of water by boat. Thence the group proceeded overland by way of Oak's Creek and the Butternut Creek Valley to the Unadilla River, the object being to inspect and survey the lands of the Otego Patent, which embraced most of what are now the townships of Oneonta and Otego.

The party returned to Otsego Lake by a different route and then went down the Susquehanna by boat to the large Indian village at Oghwaga, near the present village of Windsor in Broome county. During the trip Smith made careful note of the country through which he passed and in his diary he makes many interesting observations about the soil and the nature of the forest cover.

In 1769 when Richard Smith made this exploratory voyage down the Susquehanna there were only a few hundred white persons living in Otsego county, nearly all of them in the northern end. There were 40 or 50 families, most of them Scots-Irish, in Cherry Valley. Ten families lived at Springfield and there were other people in the vicinity.

Captain Augustine Prevost lived near the head of Otsego Lake in a house where Swanswick now stands and at the foot of the lake George Croghan had built a few houses where Cooperstown is now. The Tunnicliffe family was at Richfield Springs and there was a small hamlet at the foot of Canadaraga Lake. Joachim VanValkenberg lived at the mouth of Schenevus Creek and Percefer Carr had a clearing on the Unadilla River. There were a few Palatine German families in Middlefield.

From the mouth of the Schenevus to where the Susquehanna and the Unadilla met there was no sign of white habitation. Only the redskin and the animals of the forest lived where Oneonta and its environs now are.

## THE PLEASANT YEARS

It has been said that the years between 1910 and 1915 were the most pleasant this country has ever known and that the incredible innocence and sense of security which pervaded the land gave the time a Peter Pan quality.

We are inclined to agree with this assessment of those golden years, during which we finished high school and started our college career. The world was at peace and the average citizen could see no reason why that condition should not continue forever. Students of world affairs knew that Europe was a powder keg which would blow up sooner or later but the man in the street was not aware of that.

There was no draft to worry high school and college students and little prospect that there ever would be one. The threat of the nuclear bomb was still many years in the future. Physics textbooks still defined the atom as the smallest indivisible portion of matter even though a very few theoretical scientists knew better.

It was a happy age although it had as yet none of the daft characteristics of the Roaring Twenties. It was the Golden Age of Vaudeville. The radio had not yet put in an appearance and TV was unthought of. Although the phonograph was in its hey day, entertainment was sought outside the home, rather than in it.

It was the day of Harry Houdini with his marvelous escape tricks and of Annette Kellerman with her daring one-piece bathing suit; of Elsie Janis, who would later delight the AEF, and of Moran and Mack, the Two Black Crows; of Montgomery and Stone and Willie and Eugene Howard. The Four Marx Brothers were coming into prominence as were also Eddie Cantor and Ed Wynn, the Perfect Fool.

There were family acts such as Eddie Foy and the Seven Little Foys and the Three Keatons, with Buster being tossed around as the Human Mop. There were the Dolly Sisters and the Duncan Sisters, Nora Bayes of "Shine on Harvest Moon" fame and the "I Don't Care" girl, Eva Tanguay. Sophie Tucker became the first, as she was to be the last, of the Red Hot Mammas. And then there was perhaps the greatest single act in vaudeville history, Sir Harry Lauder, a name virtually unknown today.

Despite the general feeling of contentment, change was in the air during that half decade from 1910 to 1915. New ways of life were competing with the old. The age of the automobile was fast developing. The first income tax was levied in 1913. Its effect was minuscule at first but it would eventually put an end to the quarter of a million dollar dinners and dances of the descendants of the Robber Barons.

Social consciousness was creeping into the minds of men and reform was on the wing. Women were being emancipated and a movement was under way to allow them to vote! Whereas fashion in 1900 had decreed that a lady's skirt should touch the toe of her shoe, by 1915 ankles were beginning to show.

Men were starting to wear wrist watches, which had hitherto been considered too effeminate for masculine use. Watch chains began to disappear and with them Elks teeth, Masonic charms and Phi Beta Kappa keys. Men still wore hats but the Fedora and the straw boater were replacing the derby and the silk topper.

And then came the assassination of the Archduke of Austria and within a month Europe was at war. The world would never again be as it was on the morning of June 28, 1914.

## MUSIC IN THE SPRING

With the first signs of spring, back in the good old days, the voice of the hurdy-gurdy was heard in our land. Returning with the birds from wherever they had hibernated during the winter months, the swarthy, often ear-ringed men who operated the hand organs and the street pianos swarmed into the towns and cities to the great delight of kids and, we suspect, of their elders as well.

In this day of radio, television, movies and hi-fi, it is hard to believe that people once derived pleasure from listening to the mechanical sound of a hurdy-gurdy but folks were not surfeited with pleasure then as they are today. Love of music, even of a simple variety, has always been a human trait and a half century and more ago you couldn't satisfy your desire for music by simply pushing a button or turning a knob. You took your music where you found it.

The hand organ operator was nearly always accompanied by a monkey, who perched atop the music box during the concert and after the tune had stopped scampered around at the end of a long tether, collecting coins in its hat or in a tin cup. When it was apparent that the small crowd had been sucked dry of its small change, the minstrel would transfer the organ from his chest to his back and wander off to another green pasture.

The street pianos were mounted on a pair of wheels and were generally manned by a team of two. One man would turn the crank while the other collected the tribute. When in motion one man pulled the contrivance from within a pair of thills while the other pushed.

Occasionally a German band of from two to five musicians would hit Oneonta, giving concerts on street corners. These troubadors were a delight to everyone. Sometimes they would stay a week, performing in public during the day and playing for parties during the evenings.

Music of a different sort was provided by another traveler, the scissors grinder, who toted his foot-operated grindstone from house to house in search of knives and shears to sharpen. It took a skill which the average housewife, and often her husband, did not possess to sharpen a knife on a whetstone and the scissors grinder was always welcome.

And then there were the medicine shows. A pitchman would locate his stand on some street corner or in a vacant lot, draw a crowd by performing magic tricks or playing an instrument and then begin extolling the marvelous qualities of Hostetter's Celebrated Stomach Bitters, Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People or perhaps some worthless remedy of his own. These medicines were supposed to cure everything from dandruff to diarrhea, from in-growing toenails to the seven year itch. There were always enough buyers to prove Barnum's dictum.

Sometime the medicine shows were quite elaborate and operated under a tent. There was one company that would perform in the Metropolitan Theatre on Dietz Street for a full week each year.

The user generally thought that the medicine worked. After a few doses of a remedy with a 25 per cent alcoholic content, the sufferer felt better; after a few more he felt much, much better; another swig or two and he had forgotten all about his stomachache. The pain would return but another bottle would take care of that.

## DARK AND BLOODY GROUND

Perhaps it was the promise of abundant liquor that did the trick but, whatever the reason, it was a fateful decision that was made that summer's day in 1777 at the council in Oswego. Up to that time the Indian had remained neutral in the struggle between England and her rebellious colonies but at that historic meeting the king's representatives persuaded the Iroquois to make common cause with them.

The Indians were assured that the British sovereign would see that they never lacked for food or clothing, a bounty was promised on every scalp they could lift and they were told that rum would be as plentiful as the water in Lake Ontario. They signed and the character of the war in New York changed radically.

Under the leadership of Joseph Brant the redskins joined the Tories and proceeded to Oriskany where they engaged General Herkimer and his frontier militia. In that bloody encounter, which should rank as fully as important as the Battle of Saratoga, the Indians were badly mauled. Revenge was added to the reasons why they were fighting the colonists and a border war began which has had no equal in ferociousness.

Nowhere in all the American colonies was more misery wrought during the next five years than in the valleys of the Susquehanna, the Schoharie and the Mohawk. Otsego county was especially hard hit. Cherry Valley was burned and its inhabitants massacred; Unadilla went up in flames and settlers were driven out of Otego and Oneonta, Milford and Cooperstown.

Log farmhouses and barns were left as heaps of ashes and cultivated fields returned to their native state. The valley was reduced to a land of complete desolation. Otsego county had perhaps 900 inhabitants when the Revolution began; at its close that number fell to zero.

It must be said, however, that the Indian suffered as much as the white man. His losses in manpower were far greater than those of the colonists. His homes, his gardens and his orchards were destroyed and his altars obliterated. Never again would his council fires burn along the streams and in the forests which had been his domain for thousands of years. As a nation the Iroquois were finished and never again would they make a contribution to history.

The Indian must be somewhat pitied in this regard. He had given everything he had for a cause not his own but one espoused by an ally far away across the great waters. He had kept an ancient covenant with the British and it had cost him dearly.

It is ironic to recall that the fathers of the savages who pillaged, slaughtered and burned up and down the "dark and bloody ground" had rendered yeoman service to the colonists during the French and Indian wars. It is due in no small measure to their efforts that we live today under the principles of Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights rather than under Roman law. They had no small part in making North America an English rather than a French domain.

The Indians were not even mentioned in the peace treaty but were left to the mercy of the men whom they had fought. In New York the Indian has fared somewhat better than he has elsewhere but his lot has not been a happy one. He has been truly a forgotten man, a member of a depressed minority in whose behalf few voices have been raised.

## VILLAGE SMITHIES

If the village smithy stood beneath a spreading tree back in the days of yore, it was probably an elm tree rather than a chestnut. Oneonta's streets were lined with elms when we were a lad whereas most of the chestnuts - and there were thousands of them - were on the hills, but whether it was sheltered by a tree or not, the smithy was an indispensable institution in the time when the horse was the king of transportation, and its proprietor, the blacksmith, was a most important man.

To service a horse and wagon was a harder task than to keep a modern automobile on the road. A horse had to be fed and watered, brushed and curried and bedded down at night. The owner or a hired stableman could take care of those jobs but a veterinarian had to be consulted if the animal were sick and more or less frequent trips had to be made to the blacksmith, a man of skill and versatility.

Whatever vehicle the horse drew had to be kept clean, greased and in repair and the harness had to be oiled and mended. These jobs required the services of a skilled workman.

Before the railroad came to Oneonta in 1865, travel to far places was by stagecoach. Along the turnpikes there were stops where fresh horses replaced exhausted animals and where the latter were fed, watered, rested and perhaps shod. One such famous place in Oneonta was on Chestnut Street about where the Oneonta Theatre now stands. This was near the Oneonta and Susquehanna Houses, which were noted turnpike hostleries, and was the headquarters of the stagecoach lines operated by Hezekiah Watkins.

The railroad was the doom of the stagecoach and four but the horse continued to rule the realm of short-haul transportation until the coming of the electric trolley and the automobile.

In 1902 there were 21 blacksmith shops in Oneonta. They were not confined to the business and industrial sections of the village but were scattered all over town. There were three on Main Street, two each on Front Street (now South Main), Cherry and Academy and one each on Center, High, Spruce, Chestnut, Brook, Maple, Grove, West, Dietz, Division, Oak and Luther Streets.

In that same year there were 12 harness makers in the village, craftsmen who could repair your single or double set, or build a new rig to your specifications. There were several outfits which could repair your buggy, surrey or phaeton.

Dobbin made his presence known in many other ways. There were three big livery stables in our youth, a few smaller ones and several hitching stables which served the purpose of the present parking lot. For a fee you could have your horses sheltered and fed while you shopped.

About every other house had a horse barn behind it and in front of many homes was a hitching post and a granite or marble stepping stone. Watering troughs for the convenience of the traveling public were numerous. We recall big ones on the corner of Main and Elm and on Chestnut just below West.

The Age of the Horse is over as is the Age of Steam and the Age of the Automobile is upon us. Unless a way to stop air pollution can be found, that age will soon be over or else life on this planet will be.

## AN ANCIENT TOLLGATE

The pendulum has swung full circle. There was a time when there was a tollgate about every ten miles on the turnpikes of the state at which a fee had to be paid for each person, vehicle or animal which passed through it. As the privately owned roads became public thoroughfares, the tollgates disappeared, to the great satisfaction of the traveling public.

Now, with the building of state thruways and turnpikes the tollgate has appeared again and tribute is once more being exacted.

The last tollgate in operation hereabouts was on Franklin Mountain just above the first U-turn on the present road. The house is still standing, on the corner of the road leading down to the Hulbert summer place. This was in operation until 1916 when Otsego and Delaware counties took over the operation of the road.

The Franklin-Oneonta Turnpike Company, which operated the road for 80 years, was formed in 1835 by Dr. Samuel Case, Stephen Parish and William Miller. Prior to then Delhi was reached via the Swart Hollow road and Franklin by either going to Otego and thence over the hill or by taking the Catskill Turnpike from Unadilla.

To construct the road a way had to be cut through miles of virgin timber. So well was the turnpike engineered that when the present concrete road was built in 1926 its course deviated but little from the old route.

Tolls collected at the gate were used to defray the expense of maintaining the road. This ran to a considerable amount in the winter for after snowfalls the road had to be broken by teams of horses and squads of shovel-wielding men. On one occasion it was necessary to cut through a drift 15 to 20 feet high over which sleighs had traveled, packing the snow hard.

The tollgate keeper was allowed free use of the tollhouse but whatever other payment he received the record does not indicate. During the years many different couples were keepers at this tollgate. In 1907 it was Mr. and Mrs. David Munson. When tolls were abolished in 1916 Mr. and Mrs. Sherrill Edwards ran the tollgate.

The tollboard at the gate listed the charges as follows: "Every carriage drawn by two horses or other beasts, 12½ cents; every carriage drawn by one horse or other beast, 6½ cents; every sled or sleigh, drawn by two horses or other beasts, 6½ cents; every sleigh or sled drawn by one horse or other beast, 4 cents; horse and rider or horse led, 4 cents; every score of horses, cattle or mules, 12½ cents; every score of sheep or swine, 6 cents."

When the horseless carriage put in an appearance the same rate was charged for a one-seated car as for a carriage with one horse and for a two-seated car the same as for a carriage drawn by two animals.

There was a tollgate on the old Charlotte Turnpike just beyond the present city limits at East End and another at the bridge across the Susquehanna River.

Persons residing within a quarter of a mile of a tollgate were permitted to pass through without charge. "Running" the gate to avoid payment of the toll was a crime and the papers of the period often carried stories of persons who had been arrested on the charge and fined or imprisoned by a justice of the peace.

## THE PALATINE GERMANS

Of the several nationalities which settled central New York the Palatine German played a leading role. The early work of the Dutch was important and the English and the Scots-Irish made great contributions but it was the Germans from the Rhine country who made the first settlements in the Mohawk and Schoharie valleys (and in the town of Oneonta) and who defended the frontier against the French and the Indians and later against the British and the Tories.

The name "Palatine" comes from the title of an official sent by the Roman Caesars to govern the southwestern section of Germany after the conquest of Gaul in the first century. The section he ruled was known as the Palatinate and the inhabitants came to be known as Palatines. Both during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) and the War of the Spanish Succession (1702-1714) the German Palatinate was repeatedly and completely devastated.

In a previous story we told of how a group of Palatines visited England in 1708 and asked to be settled in America and how at the end of that year they made the voyage and located near Newburg on the Hudson. The next year nearly 3,000 Palatines made the trip, the largest single group of immigrants to come to the New World prior to the Revolution.

Most of these people found new homes in the Mohawk and Schoharie valleys in 1712. In 1723 about 20 Schoharie families went overland to the Charlotte, down that stream to the Susquehanna and thence into Pennsylvania where they founded the communities of York and Reading and became the first of the so-called Pennsylvania Dutch.

Palatine Germans with such names as Scramling, Blend and Bornt; Brewer, Swart, Morenus and Jaeger (Yager); Wolf, Jung (Young), Dietz and Cutshaw were early settlers of Oneonta and for some years German was the common tongue of the community.

It was the Palatines who held the northern frontier against the savage and destructive raids of the French and the Canadian Indians prior to the Revolution. The greatest loss of life, the greatest number of people carried away into captivity before the war was sustained by the Palatines of the Mohawk valley in 1757.

When the break came with England the Palatines embraced the colonial cause almost to a man. During the war their settlements in the Mohawk and Schoharie valleys were repeatedly attacked and the years of 1775 through 1777 were tragic ones for them.

The battle of Oriskany, when General Nicholas Herkimer and his militia defeated General St. Leger and smashed the British plan to divide the American colonies, was one of the most important in our history, less publicized than Saratoga but fully as decisive. "Of all the battles of the Revolution, the most obstinate and murderous", says Fiske, the historian. Eighty percent of the colonists engaged in the battle were Palatines.

The Palatines were superb farmers. They built bigger barns and higher fences and took better care of their animals than did their neighbors of other European stocks. Palatine blood flows today in the veins of thousands of people in Oneonta and vicinity. Theirs is a proud heritage.

## WE OWE HIM MUCH

Today he would be welcomed with open arms by industry; every possible resource would have been put at his disposal and every assistance given him to develop his theories. In his day, however, although he had an idea that was to revolutionize an industry and give pleasure to millions, Charles Edgar Fritts had to go it alone.

We have written previously about this crippled genius who was born in Oneonta and is buried in Riverside Cemetery but it would take a volume to give the full history of the man who developed the theory and built the first apparatus for recording sound on film, thus making possible the talking motion picture, the tape recorder and much of television.

Fritts was born in 1838 in a house on Chestnut Street where the Dentists' building now is. The boy received a good education but along classical, not scientific lines. He tried teaching but precise mechanical work had more appeal and he entered the employ of Potter Burton, Oneonta's pioneer jeweler. He learned the trade of watchmaker and repairer and became so proficient that he wrote two books about the art, one of which is still in use.

For some inexplicable reason he forsook his trade when he was about thirty and engaged in raising trees and plants in New Jersey. This venture proved financially disastrous and he lost all his savings. He then hit the road as an itinerant watchmaker, visiting many communities. All the time he was studying scientific books and journals, thinking and dreaming.

He sold an invention of some sort and that determined his career. An inventor he would be and an inventor he became. During his travels he had met and impressed a man named Hopkinson, editor of the "Jewelers' Circular". Hopkinson staked him and he went to New York, renting rooms at 303 West 50th Street. He turned his quarters into a laboratory and here he worked with two assistants, scarcely seeing anyone else except noted American and European scientists who knew of his work and sought him out to pick his brains for the usable scientific ideas which were always there.

Fritts was one of the few men in the world who fully understood the inter-relationship between the waves of light, sound and electricity and out of his knowledge of this arcane subject grew his "sound on film" inventions. Hopkinson died while Fritts was at the height of his activity and the support money stopped coming in. Now the inventor had to rely upon the pittance which he received as book royalties. He discharged his helpers and moved to a single room. From then on he was always on the move, hounded by creditors from one lodging house to another.

He became more and more crippled until finally he was paralyzed from the waist down. But cold and hungry as he often was, he never stopped thinking and dreaming. Finally, in 1905, this inventor who was born too soon, died.

Although he had made application in 1880, the patent for his sound recording device was not granted until 1916, long after he was dead. The examiners simply did not understand his theory and its vast importance. The world had to wait until 1927 for talking pictures although Fritts had laid down clearly the theory and the method nearly fifty years before.

Scientists are now beginning to realize the extent of Fritts' genius and his contributions to technical knowledge and some day he may be ranked with such as Edison and Steinmetz, Morse, Bell and Marconi.

## A TRIP TO GOTHAM

Sam Jones had no desire to make the long and arduous trip to New York but necessity had forced his hand. His land holdings in the tiny hamlet of Milfordville (it would not be called Oneonta until 1830) were in question and he had to settle the matter with the agent of the holders of the Wallace Patent. Unfortunately the agent lived in the growing metropolis to the south-east.

As he sat before his rude dwelling enjoying the mild air of a June Sunday in 1817, Jones thought of the journey which lay ahead of him. He would rise before dawn, saddle his horse and start down the old Indian trail along the river, with Unadilla, the western terminus of the Catskill Turnpike, his destination. Crossing the Susquehanna at Wattles Ferry, he would spend Monday night in the small inn on the southern bank.

Early Tuesday morning he would board the four-horse Concord stagecoach for the three-day and two-night trip to Catskill. The road went up the Ouleout through Franklin to Treadwell and then turned left to Meredith Square. Thence it followed the crest of the hills around East Meredith to Doonan's Corners and Harpersfield where it hit what is now Route 23.

Going through Stamford, Grand Gorge and Manorkill, the highway climbed Mt. Pisgah and then dropped down to the Hudson River valley and Catskill. Leaving Unadilla Tuesday morning, Jones would reach Catskill Thursday evening, spending the intervening nights at two of the many taverns which flanked the famous highway. Some of these were hardly more than grog shops but there were a few real inns which could accommodate as many as 40 guests.

He would spend Thursday night in Catskill and on Friday morning would take the ferry across the Hudson and resume his coach journey down the east side of the stream, passing through quaint Palatine German and Dutch villages. If all went well, he would reach New York Saturday night after nearly a week on the road.

That was a century and a half ago. Roads would become better and the trip less difficult but the journey would take several days until 1865 when the railroad came to Oneonta. The trip to the metropolis on "the cars" could then be made in a day. The automobile and the motor bus would eventually replace the railroad as transportation media and the trip to the big city would become a matter of hours.

It took over 200 hours for Sam Jones to make his journey to New York and return in 1817. Last week, 150 years later, we boarded a Catskill Airways plane at 4 p.m. to make the afternoon run to Gotham as Steve Low's guest. Within a very few minutes we passed over the road which Jones had traversed. Below we could see rolling farmland dotted with houses where in Jones' day had been solid forest. Soon we were skirting the Catskills which were so forbidding to the early settlers. We crossed the Hudson at the George Washington bridge, passed between Central Park and Yankee Stadium and landed at LaGuardia Airport, territory which was open water when Jones made his trip.

A half hour at LaGuardia and we were airborne for the return trip. At about 6 o'clock we landed at Oneonta's beautiful municipal airport, having made in less than two hours a trip which took Sam Jones over 100 times as long.

Think it over, folks, and ponder your blessings.

## THE AGE OF WOOD

For thousands of years the American Indian, as well as our European ancestors, lived in the Age of Stone, fashioning their implements and weapons from rock. Eventually they learned to extract metal from its ore and the Age of Iron began. This is the period of historic time in which we now live.

There was another span of years, especially in the north-eastern United States, which historians ignore - the Age of Wood, which reached its peak about the middle of the 19th century. There were two reasons why this age came rather late in history and why it came to flower in eastern America.

First of all, fine craftsmanship in wood could not be attained until there were steel tools which could be sharpened to a razor edge. By that time the timber resources of the Old World were so depleted that houses had to be built of brick or stone with roofs of thatch, tile or slate.

The pioneers who came to America were well schooled in the art of forging and fashioning steel tools and they found here all kinds of wood in inexhaustible quantity. Under those circumstances the Age of Wood was inevitable.

As the army of occupation moved steadily westward the pioneer with his axe and his ox team led the way while following in his wake were various kinds of craftsmen. The most numerous of these were the carpenters, the men who shaped the huge beams and cross timbers of houses and barns with broadaxe and adze; who hand planed the siding and floor boards; who made the window frames and the doors right on the spot.

And then there were a lesser number of more highly skilled workers in wood - the joiners and cabinet makers, the bridge carpenters, the wheelwrights and millwrights and the coopers, all of them necessary to the frontier economy.

Little is written about the cooper but he was a necessity in the days before the tin can, the paper bag and the plastic container. Products of the farm had to be stored and shipped and the cooper made the necessary containers. He manufactured the cider and pork barrels, the flour and whisky barrels. He made milk pails and sap buckets, wash tubs and butter tubs together with the old oaken bucket that hung in the well.

There were two classes of coopers, designated as "loose" and "tight". The "loose" cooper made receptacles for dry stuffs, such as tobacco, salt, flour and fruit. The aristocrats of the trade were the "tight" coopers who were so skilled of eye and hand that they could bevel the staves so accurately that the container would be as moisture tight as a tin pail. They made the sap buckets and the milk pails, the barrels and casks for cider and whisky. Oneonta had many coopers through its early years, probably of both varieties.

A very specialized woodcraft was pump log boring. In the early days when water had to be conveyed from a spring to a house or barn, wooden pipes were used. A hole was drilled lengthwise through small logs from six to ten feet in length which were then joined together by a cone and cup arrangement. It took a man of strength and skill to start boring at one end of a log and finally have the augur emerge square in the center of the other end. A special augur was used of which the Farmers Museum at Cooperstown has several specimens.

## MAIL ORDER CATALOGS

When we told a friend the other day that we had had a ball looking over some old Sears catalogs, particularly the 1905 edition, he remarked that he could not see what pleasure or profit anyone could get from perusing a catalog of outmoded articles.

He is 20 years younger than ourself and probably wouldn't have had much fun going over the 1905 catalog but if the edition had been that of 1920, we think that he too would have had a ball, for the perusal would have brought back the days of his youth. He would have seen pictures of the toys he used to play with, the books he read, the sports equipment he used and the quaint clothes he once regarded as the last word in sartorial elegance.

As for profit, if a person has any interest in the ever changing social and economic life of our country, he can find no better textbooks than the annual catalogs of Sears, Roebuck and Company, Montgomery Ward, Butler Brothers or any other of the mail order houses.

Sears issued its first catalog in 1886 just when the United States was emerging from the period of the Civil War and its aftermath into an industrial expansion unparalleled in the history of the world. Ever since then the annual catalogs of the mail order people have mirrored the changing times with a faithfulness and a detail that no history book can match.

For a quarter century after 1886 the country was still in the horse and buggy days in more ways than one. Successive catalogs clearly indicate the slow but steady changes in technology and in culture that were inexorably altering the nature of our civilization and the lives of our people.

There were no automobiles in the 1886 catalog and no bathroom fixtures nor were there electric kitchen and household appliances, silk stockings or cosmetics. By leafing through the volume you can get a pretty good idea of how the people lived, what clothes they wore, what their diversions were and what the inside of their homes looked like.

America's civilization is brand new as history goes, with the stone age less than four centuries back in time. How new is shown by the fact that emigrant wagon covers did not disappear from the Sears catalog until 1924. The automobile did not make its appearance in the pages until 1905 when a book about horseless carriages was advertised. And yet it was the automobile that 20 years later caused Sears to abandon its exclusive mail order policy and start establishing retail stores. With distance obliterated by the motor car, people preferred to go to a retail establishment and actually see the merchandise offered for sale.

Sears began to make and sell automobiles in 1908, the first model being of 14-horsepower and equipped with solid tires. The company made cars for only about five years and the 1915 catalog did not list them but it did present a multitude of accessories.

The gradual rise of installment selling is reflected in the catalogs. In 1905 the terms of purchase were cash on the line. In 1910 the Sears catalog warned against the practice of credit buying in these words: "Don't buy on the installment plan. It costs too much in the end." By 1915, however, installment selling had crept into the catalog just as it was creeping into every type of merchandising. A new era had begun and the mail order catalogs fully chronicled its birth.

## HUNTINGTON'S GOLD

It is useless to speculate on what might have happened if something else hadn't occurred but it is an interesting pastime, nonetheless. For instance, how would Collis P. Huntington have spent his life if gold had not been discovered in California?

Would he have stayed in Oneonta with his brother Solon, thereby missing the fame and fortune that later came to him? Probably not, but who knows? The fact is that he did lead the first party of Otsego county residents to the gold fields and that he was one of the extremely few of the thousands of Americans who made the trek to realize anything out of the venture. It should be added that his fortune did not come from sluicing gold but from mercantile pursuits and railroad building.

It was in January of 1848 that James Marshall found gold in Sutter's Creek but the news was received with skepticism in the East and it was not until fall that the great stampede got underway. Collis Huntington, who was conducting a general store in Oneonta with his brother Solon, sent a cargo of merchandise around the Horn late in 1848 and in March of 1849 he and five other Oneontans left for California by way of New York and Panama.

Huntington's companions were E.R. Sabin, George Reynolds, Carleton E. Watkins and two others whose names are not a matter of record. Sabin turned back because of illness but the other five, after several months in Panama during which Huntington by shrewd trading increased his stake by several thousand dollars, continued the journey, reaching California on August 30.

One day at the sluiceways was enough for Huntington. Going to Sacramento, he opened a branch of the Oneonta store, prospered mightily and went on to help build the Central Pacific railroad and to accumulate a colossal fortune. None of the Oneonta men sought gold for very long. Reynolds carried mail and organized an express business to carry gold from the diggings to Sacramento and San Francisco, staying in the West five years before returning to Oneonta.

Carleton Emmons Watkins stayed in California and became one of the world's great scenic photographers. He was the first man to photograph the giant redwoods and made many magnificent pictures of the Franciscan Missions and of the Columbia River scenery, including a famous one of Oneonta Gorge. Mt. Watkins, which is reflected in Mirror Lake in the Yosemite Valley, was named after him.

The Oneonta party was the first but by no means the only group of Otsego people to make the arduous trip. Dr. Gaius L. Halsey of Unadilla went with a party from his native Connecticut. They went around the Horn and met in Sacramento another Unadilla group composed of Vincent Page, Rufus G. Mead, Charles Smith and Henry Wright.

Frederick T. Jarvis led a party of eight from Cooperstown, Fly Creek and Hartwick. This group went to Deposit in a lumber wagon inscribed "Bound for California" and drawn by four horses. They went thence to New York on the new Erie railroad and from there around the Horn by boat.

Other Otsegoans, including Isaac Cooper, a grandson of Judge William, made the trip. Some returned home after a short time while others remained, some of them becoming prominent in various pursuits.

## HISTORY OF A BLOCK

Every structure on the south side of Main Street from Broad to Chestnut was erected following a fire which had destroyed a building which had previously occupied the site. Such was not the case on the other side of the street. The fire which destroyed the Central Hotel in 1910 has been the only conflagration of any size on the north side and consequently the blocks from Dietz to Chestnut are the original brick structures on the sites and are older in most cases than their neighbors across the street.

Let's trace the history of one of them, the block on the northwest corner of Dietz and Main, which is the oldest brick structure in the city. Jacob Dietz came to the tiny hamlet in 1812 and built a small store and a fine residence on the site of Bresee's. Some of the outbuildings occupied the land on what is now the corner of Dietz Street. In 1850 these were razed and Turner McCall built a home there. This was gone by 1866 when George Z. Saunders and William D. Bissell built the present two-store, three story block there, carting the brick in from Fort Plain.

The store to the west was first occupied by the general dry goods and grocery store of William S. Bedford and then by Morrison's grocery. In 1872 Albert Tobey purchased that half of the block and started a dry goods store which lasted for many years under the names of Tobey's; Tobey, Gurney & Tobey; Tobey & Gurneys; M. Gurney & Sons; Capron's, and W. Lloyd Kennedy. For the past few years drug stores have occupied the space, first Hewitt's, then Flack's and now McPhail's. The Oneonta Masonic lodge met on the third floor from 1871 to 1892.

The corner store was first occupied by the hardware business of G.Z. Saunders, one of the builders. In 1868 he was succeeded by Edwards & Liddle and that firm by M.L. & D.A. VanWie. David Wilber brought his private bank from Milford to Oneonta in 1873 and until 1875 it and its successor, the Wilber National Bank occupied the rear portion of the store.

In 1872 Walter L. Brown, lured by the building of the railroad shops, came to Oneonta from Albany and, with Romeyne Brown, bought out the VanWie interests in the hardware store, which became Brown & Brown. Under the successive names of Walter L. Brown, Brown & Ward, Brown & Turner and Walter L. Brown Hardware Company, the store was a business landmark in Oneonta for a half century.

Walter Brown was one of the community's most prominent citizens. A power in Republican politics, he was a supervisor, state assemblyman and state senator. He was a member of the first Local Board of the Oneonta State Normal School, long a director of the Oneonta Water Company, president of the Otsego & Delaware Telephone Company and was for 20 years president of the Fox Hospital board. As president of the Oneonta Union Agricultural Society for 40 years, he and George I. Wilber made the Oneonta Fair the great institution that it was.

In 1919 Mr. Brown sold the block to John Laskaris who remodeled it extensively and moved his confectionery business there from across the street. He added restaurant facilities and for years this was the favorite rendezvous of students and townspeople. Mr. Laskaris retired in 1949 and remodeled the store as the Jo Ann Dress Shop, which was operated by his daughters. The Galinn jewelry store, owned by Carl Puylara, now occupies the space.

## IN HIGH SCHOOL AT LAST

We were sitting on top of the world. It was September of 1909 and we were entering Oneonta High School as a freshman, having graduated from the eighth grade at the State Normal School in the once famous "June Play" ceremony.

We were 13 and hence a teenager although that designation was unknown at the time. However, when you entered high school it was recognized that childhood was behind you and that you were standing on the threshold of man's estate, to use a threadbare expression.

We were to spend the next four years in the beautiful new high school building on Academy Street, the finest structure of its kind for miles around. It was true that there were four flights of stairs to ascend and descend many times a day but young legs were muscular in that time when automobiles were a rarity.

Harry Rockwell was superintendent of schools in 1909. He would resign in March of 1910 and would eventually become president of Buffalo State Teachers College. His replacement would be George J. Dann, who would have a tenure in office unequalled in the history of New York State education.

The principal was Richard E. Morris, a gentleman and a scholar who, despite disciplinary deficiencies, had the admiration and respect of every student. The assistant principal and head of the mathematics department was Ella M. Briggs of blessed memory.

We recall that in our freshman year we took five subjects. English I was taught by Emily Palmer. Grammer, which we feel is somewhat neglected today, was part of the course and we remember the many sentence diagramming sessions.

Biology was taught by Glenn Bulger, who also doubled as a chaperone on the hayrides we used to have on pleasant fall afternoons. Part of the class had Miss Briggs in Algebra but we drew Mr. Durkee, whose first name we cannot recall. Principal Morris taught Latin I for part of the year, being succeeded by Henry (Tubby) North. The fifth subject was mechanical drawing, taught by a young lady whose name does not come to mind but who was short, dark and skinny.

As for music there just warn't any. There was an orchestra, with the members' parents buying the instruments and paying for outside lessons, but that was the only promise of the great musical program which high school students today enjoy.

There were no football games to be anticipated. The sport had once existed at OHS but a boy broke a collar bone and the game was abolished as being too rough and dangerous. Basketball and baseball were the only varsity sports and if a boy played neither, his participation in athletics was absolutely nil.

It would seem that all a boy or girl could do in school was to study and to learn. However, everybody succeeded in having a pretty good time. There were Laskaris' and Butterfield's where you could buy a soda for a dime and at Slade's drugstore you could get for 15 cents a marvelous concoction called a Soft Coal Special.

We did have something, however, which is lacking today - the seemingly certain prospect of a peaceful life with no military service ahead. That proved to be an illusion and within a decade most of the boys we knew in school would be in the armed services in World War I.

## FORGOTTEN FARM CHORES

The month of July in 1837 promised to be a busy one for John Doe, an immigrant from Connecticut who was clearing a farm in the Oneonta Creek valley. He would have to make several trips the tiny hamlet of Oneonta and he was wondering just where he was going to find the time.

To begin with, he had just burned over the south lot and had a quantity of wood ashes which he must take to the ashery under the bank on the south side of Main Street (about where the Diana restaurant is now) for conversion into potash. The shoemaker was due at his home soon and he had to pick up his leather from the Sylvanus Smith tannery on the creek bank back of where the Legion Home is today. He had taken a number of cow and deacon hides to the tannery over six months ago and the finished leather should be ready by now.

He had several yards of homespun and home woven cloth which he must take to the fulling mill on Main Street just below the McDonald gristmill and have it prepared so that it could be made into a Sunday suit for himself and a dress for his wife.

Lastly, he had to take a load of wheat to the distillery on the slope to the south of Main Street (where the Bernstore on Broad Street is today). This he would trade for whisky which he would take to the nearby E.R. Ford stone store and barter for a kit of mackerel, some nails, salt for the cattle and powder for his rifle.

No farmer has had these chores to do for well over a hundred years but during the Age of Homespun they were common place. It has been a long time since there has been a distillery, a fulling mill, a tannery or an ashery in Oneonta but there was a day when these industries were indispensable to the pioneer community and at least one of each could be found in every village of any size.

We have mentioned asheries and fulling mills several times in our stories. Since these terms have not been in common use for generations, we are often asked as to their meaning.

An ashery was a place where potash was made from the wood ashes which were so plentiful in the days when the forests were being cleared. Trees were felled, cut into convenient lengths and then burned in huge piles. The ashes were gathered and the soluble lye leached out with water. The liquor was then boiled down to a solid mass in an iron kettle. This cake was known as "black salts", the dark color resulting from the presence of carbon and other impurities. The farmer sold this form of potash to the ashery for about \$3.00 per hundred pounds and this was about the only cash some farmers ever saw.

At the ashery there were brick kilns in which the black salts were burned at a high temperature, consuming the carbon and other impurities. The resultant bluish-white and fairly pure potash was known as "pearl ash". Some asheries had facilities for leaching and boiling and to these establishments the farmer sold his ashes for about eight cents a bushel.

Before hand woven woolen cloth could be made into clothing it had to be "finished" and this work was done in a fulling mill. The process varied according to whether flannel, broadcloth or some other finish was required but essentially it meant soaking the cloth in fuller's earth and water while pounding it with big hammers. This thickened the web and reduced it in length. A nap was then raised by scratching the cloth with thistles. The material was then spread on tenter hooks to shrink and dry.

## PLEASURES OF SNOW

### SNOW!

The white stuff is familiar to all of us who live in this clime but our reactions to it vary. To the ski enthusiast and to those who sell ski equipment or operate ski runs with the bars and restaurants that go with them, snow is the staff of life and the more of it they see the better.

For others snow holds no charm whatever. The men who keep our streets clear are not enamored of it nor are the pedestrians who have to traverse unshoveled walks. Those whose work takes them out on icy highways swept by snow flurries could get along very nicely without the stuff.

How did snow affect the Oneontan back in the horse and buggy days, say in 1905 when this writer was ten years old? To the boy or girl, man or woman of those days snow was inevitable. They couldn't dodge it so they learned to live with it. They dressed for it and they learned to master it and use it for their own purposes.

There were a few automobiles in Oneonta at that time but with the first touch of winter they were jacked up, covered with sheets and allowed to hibernate until spring. At about this time out came the long underwear, the heavy overcoats, the wool scarves, the mittens and the rubber boots.

Snow shovels and ice spuds were readied for use since walks were really kept clean in those far off days. The streets were not plowed since there had to be a good covering of snow for the sleighs, cutters and delivery sleds. The trolley tracks on Main, Chestnut, Broad, Market, Church, Center and Maple Streets were kept clear by the trolley company. A little later than 1905 rotary plows were used which piled the snow next to the curbs where it stayed until it melted.

By 7 a.m. most stores were open for business and the first chore in the winter was to clean the walks if it had snowed during the night. By the time the first customer appeared the walks were clear right to the curb. If it snowed during the day the walks were shoveled at frequent intervals.

Snow shoveling was one of the first morning tasks of the householder. Most people walked to work and if the snow was trampled it made the task of shoveling that much harder. If there was ice on the walk, use was made of the ice spud, a tool which is rarely seen in operation these days.

With the first snowfall the kids got their sleds and skis out of the cellar or attic and prepared for exhilarating sport after school and on Saturdays. There are many hilly streets in Oneonta and before the advent of the automobile there was little traffic to prevent their use by sledders. In the evenings there was the exquisite pleasure on bobsledding down Elm Street and Ford Avenue. Sleighs kept off those streets during periods of good sledding and the only thing the helmsmen of the big bobs had to worry about was the trolley traffic on Center Street. A guard was always stationed there to warn of approaching cars so that the bobs could be steered into the curbside drifts.

In 1905 people, no matter how affluent, stayed in town during the winter. Florida, Arizona and California were in the process of development and offered little to the traveler. Furthermore, summer, not winter, was the time for vacations. In the winter you worked, no matter what the weather. Times were indeed different in what senior citizens like to think of as the good old days.

## RAILROAD EXCURSIONS

There were 272 Oneonta men, women and children on the train as it pulled out of the D. & H. station at 7 o'clock on a hot Saturday morning in August of 1906. Another section would leave at 7:30. More than 1,300 people would be on the excursion train when it reached Lake George, its destination.

The occasion was the annual YMCA excursion to the beautiful lake. Various activities, including a 40-mile boat ride, would occupy the day and the return trains would reach Oneonta at midnight. The next day was Sunday and the holidaymakers could rest from their strenuous fun.

Back in the old days the railroad was more than just a means of getting passengers and freight from one point to another. It provided the average man a means of release from the tedium of every day living in the form of excursions to far off and exciting places.

Today you can jump into your car and within minutes can be on the golf course or by the lake shore. Trips of several hundred miles to vacation spots are commonplace.

Back in the horse and buggy days it wasn't so easy to get where you wanted to go. Old Dobbin could take you to Strader's Lake or Stillwater but if you went much further the day was consumed in just traveling.

Even with the advent of the motor car there were difficulties. The early automobiles were undependable and good roads were few and far between. It was quite an accomplishment to drive to Cooperstown and back and New York was a two day safari with trouble and danger lurking around every curve.

If you wanted fast and comfortable transportation you took a train or trolley. Such travel was safe, too. In its nearly 90 years of passenger operation the D. & H. never lost a patron.

During the summer months there were frequent excursions on the steam and electric lines. The YMCA had its annual journey to Lake George and the Order of Railway Conductors and the Knights of Columbus ran jaunts to Binghamton. On the U. & D. there were excursions to Ashokan, Kingston and New York and the trolley ran excursion cars to Otsego Park, Canadarago Park and Utica.

There were many excursions into Oneonta during the Central New York Fair, bringing thousands of people from Albany and Schenectady, from Binghamton, from Scranton and from Kingston. Frequently on these trips a baggage car was fitted up as a buffet and bar and food and drinks were sold.

There were no busses in those days and if a group trip was planned, such as a visit to a fraternal lodge in Unadilla or Schenevus, the guaranteee of a certain number of fares secured a private car. We recall that when the Cooperstown Rotary club was installed in the 1920s Oneonta members chartered a special trolley car to make the trip to the county seat.

The trolley line had open cars which made its excursions especially enjoyable. It was quite a treat to take a ride to Canadarago Park near Richfield or even to Otsego Park, a small pleasure resort between West Oneonta and Laurens.

Pleasure trips are available on the DO Line during the season and you can get a taste of the flavor of the days of old. However, you'll go to the station on Railroad Avenue in a motor car, not by horse and buggy or on a horse drawn carry-all.

## WOMEN'S WORK WAS NEVER DONE

"The bathroom here is so nice I can hardly wait for Saturday night."

So wrote an Oneontan who was staying in a hotel while on a business trip to New York back in 1900. Except in small villages and out in the country, inside plumbing was not a rarity at the turn of the century but the custom of daily bathing most decidedly was. The best doctors would tell you that too much water had a debilitating effect upon the human system.

This incident, whether apocryphal or not, is illustrative of the enormous changes in the American way of life between 1900 and, say 1925, when the new century was one quarter over. Architecture, types of amusement, modes of transportation - almost every aspect of living changed radically.

Oneonta's first automobile, a Locomobile owned by John Bowdish, came to town in 1900. By 1904 there were ten motor cars in the village and in 1905 the Oneonta Herald made this observation: Two or three years ago an automobile was a novelty on our streets. Yesterday eight were seen at one time on Main Street."

By 1925 the buzz buggy had firmly established itself and the reign of the horse as the king of short-haul transportation was over. Whereas in 1900 there was not a single hard road in Oneonta with the exception of Main, Broad and short sections of Chestnut and Dietz Streets (which were paved with wooden blocks), by 1925 Main Street was paved with asphalt (there had been an interval of brick paving from 1902 to 1924) and all of the other principal thoroughfares in the city had hard surfaces of one sort or another.

Home living changed considerably from 1900 to 1925. During the first years of the century there was a seldom varied work routine in the home. Monday was wash-day. Washing machines were unknown and the scrubbing was done by hand in wash tubs, which had to be laboriously filled. In some homes there were stationary tubs with running water but they were an exception.

Tuesday was ironing day with the flat-irons heated on the kitchen coal stove. Men's "boiled" shirts, collars and cuffs (both detachable), women's and children's dresses and underwear, starched to a point of wooden inflexibility, had to be "done up" at home.

Wednesday was sewing and mending day (most women's and children's clothing was made at home in those days). Huge piles of socks and stockings had to be darned. The sewing machine was coming into use but the fine work was done by hand. Thursday was a kind of mid-week rest day with not many fixed tasks but there was always crocheting and embroidering, quilting and the making of rag carpets.

Friday was cleaning day. Her hair protected by a dust-cap or towel worn like a turban, the housewife swept the thick carpets (at that time about every room of every house had wall-to-wall carpeting) with a broom or used the newfangled Bissell carpet-sweeper. Vacuum cleaners were far in the future. Kitchen floors and porches had to be scrubbed and the iron stove "blacked" and polished.

Saturday was baking day. Nearly every housewife baked her own bread, pies, cookies, cakes and doughnuts. Sunday was a day of rest for everybody except the wife, for there was often "company" on that day, which meant extra cooking.

## OVER THE SNOW WE GO

One of the most delightful pleasures of the Horse and Buggy Era was sleigh riding, an experience which most Americans of today have never had. Given the combination of a brisk winter's day and a lively horse hitched to a cutter and you had an ideal situation for pleasure. If your one and only was sharing the buffalo robe with you, what more could heaven hold?

A sleigh went over the ground so easily that it appeared you were traveling faster than you actually were. Probably this accounted for some of the tall stories concerning the speed of a horse over ice and snow. No matter how well packed the snow was, there was always a certain amount of slippage and, furthermore, the long sleigh runners offered much more resistance and friction than did the wheels of a buggy.

After school and on Saturdays a favorite pastime of children was hooking rides on sleighs, especially on the long, low ones used for delivery purposes. Some drivers didn't mind your doing this but there were mean ones who did and the long whips you had to dodge were keen of lash. Or you might hook the tow rope of your sled to the supports of the rear runners of a sleigh and enjoy a ride on your own conveyance.

And then there were the straw rides on moonlight nights when ten or a dozen couples would burrow into the straw on the bottom of a high sleigh heaped with buffalo robes and blankets and drive out to the Goodyear Hotel at Colliers or to one of the inns in Otego or Laurens for hot chocolate and doughnuts and perhaps an old fashioned square dance. There would be a chaperone of course, but he or she usually sat up front near the driver with back turned to what was going on behind.

A sound we miss in winter is that of sleighbells, whose manufacture was quite an industry in some communities. The small town of East Hampton in central Connecticut had at one time half a dozen concerns engaged in making sleighbells, and thousands of sugar barrels filled with small bells were shipped out of there annually. There were many different patterns of sleighbells but the most common were the globe, band and rim bells, either single- or double-throated, meaning that the bells had a single slit in them to let out the sound or two slits cutting across each other at right angles. These bells were sold by the pound as loose bells or were wired or riveted to neck straps, body straps or martingale straps.

A major pleasure of living in the Horse and Buggy era was the almost total absence of the manifestations of government. Kids were not concerned with this but their parents and grandparents most decidedly were. Especially was this true of immigrants from European countries, many of whom had fled their native lands to escape the omnipresence of uniformed minions of royal, provincial and municipal law.

When we were a lad Federal government was manifest only in the Postoffice and State Regents examinations. There were no income tax people, or Social Security folks or armed forces recruiters. Absent were health inspectors, welfare people, boiler inspectors, urban renewal workers, highway engineers or any other of the myriads of federal and state bureaucrats who make life difficult for the citizen of today. Within the framework of consideration for the rights of others, a man could live as he wished and fulfill his destiny on his own terms.

## FATHER OF THE NORMAL

Who can properly be called the "Father of Oneonta State Normal School"? What man, more than any other was responsible for bringing to the community the institution which has grown into the amazing State University College at Oneonta?

Historians, like baseball umpires, have to make judgement calls, and that means a difference of opinion. Dr. Carey W. Brush of SUCO, who has written an excellent history of the school, has nominated George I. Wilber, banker and philanthropist, for the honor and no one can deny that this powerful man had a very large finger in the pie.

Grip's Valley Gazette, well illustrated 86-page booklet describing the Oneonta of 1896, gives top credit to Frank B. Arnold of Unadilla, our assemblyman at the time, and it must be admitted that his was a potent voice in the matter.

Our own candidate for the title is Willard E. Yager, noted Indian anthropologist and author and editor of the Oneonta Herald, a weekly newspaper. This opinion is based not only upon our research of written material bearing upon the matter but upon remembered conversations with people who were actually concerned with the event, among them Mr. Yager himself.

Actually no man can be given sole credit. The chain of events had many links, one as important as the other. It all began in the early 1880s in an endeavor to strengthen the economy of an already bustling village. Who first suggested the idea of securing a state institution we do not know, but it might well have been the enterprising Mr. Wilber.

At first the endeavor was to get any state institution, no matter what its nature. There is no evidence to show that Mr. Wilber was ever interested in education per se and we feel that he would have settled for a state prison or an insane asylum. The payroll was the important factor to him.

Willard Yager now steps into the picture. This fine scholar saw the need of a state school in the valley and it would appear that he was the man who first suggested that an effort be made to secure a school rather than an institution of another type. He talked up the matter and pounded away at the theme in his editorials. Evidently Mr. Wilber considered the school idea feasible and fell into line (but at the head of the procession).

At this point Assemblyman Arnold enters the game. It might be supposed that he would want the school located in his home town of Unadilla but he owed a political debt to George I. Wilber and when you were under obligation to that gentleman you fulfilled that obligation or else.

The legislator introduced a bill calling for an appropriation for the school and since he was chairman of the all important Ways and Means committee, easily secured its passage. Oneonta State Normal School - and SUCO - were on their way.

It really doesn't matter too much who was the father of the school. The important thing is that Oneonta got an institution that has grown to a size, a stature and an importance that Messrs. Yager, Arnold and Wilber could hardly have envisioned in their wildest dreams.

## THE LOVE APPLE

Children had to pass the patch of tomato plants every day on their way to school and their parents didn't like the situation one little bit. Vapors arising from the growing plants were injurious to the boys and girls and if they were tempted to eat one of the red bulbs, cancer would surely result. Consequently the community fathers declared the tomatoes to be a menace to public health and ordered that the plants be destroyed.

This incident actually happened in the Oneonta of the 1830s. Today, when the tomato and the soups and sauces made therefrom are universally eaten, it seems inconceivable that there was a time when the red fruit (the tomato is a fruit botanically) was regarded as poisonous and was grown for ornamental purposes only. When our mother was a child the tomato was called a "love apple" and was planted as a flower.

The Indian never knew the tomato just as he was ignorant of most of the other modern foodstuffs even though, in the Woodland stage, he depended upon agriculture for all of his food except meat. His crops were few in number, embracing only corn, beans, pumpkins, squash, artichokes and tobacco. All of these were indigenous to the New World and were unknown to the Europeans.

It did not take the colonist long to start cultivating the vegetables which he found growing in his adopted land and soon they, especially corn, were a standard part of his diet. Each colonist brought with him seeds of plants unknown in America but which had been grown in Europe for centuries. These included carrots, parsnips, turnips, beets and cabbage.

Potatoes are now the most important of our garden vegetables but they were unknown to the men who settled Jamestown, New Amsterdam and the Massachusetts Bay area. This tuber was of South American origin and came to North America by way of Europe, not reaching here until the 18th century. There is a story to the effect that in 1709 potatoes were served as a rare, exotic delicacy at a Harvard dinner. However, by the time Otsego County was settled the potato was in wide use.

The only native fruits were the wild plum and cherry and it was the white man who introduced the Indian to the apple, the pear and the peach. Apple orchards were a part of many Iroquois farms but they all post-dated the coming of the colonist. The honey bee was not known in the western hemisphere until the white man brought it from across the sea. The Indian called the bee "The White Man's Stinging Fly".

The greatest cereal grains of the early settler were wheat, rye, oats, barley, buckwheat and the field pea, none of them native to America. Wheat was the one most used for food and, almost unbelievably, Otsego County once led the nation in its production, although that distinction lasted but a short time. Some rye went into bread but rye straw was fully as important as the grain since it made the best bedding for horses. The rye bread of the pioneer was hard, dark and tough and was very unlike the rye bread of today, which contains more wheat than rye flour.

Much of the grain produced by the first settlers was made into whiskey, a widely used barter medium in the days when there was very little hard money.

## HOW IT WAS IN 1901

"Building lot, 60x150 feet, Hazel St. near Normal, \$200," "Residence on Maple St., 12 rooms, modern improvements, located for Normal boarders, \$3200."

These were only two of many bargains offered by Squire Gardner, realtor, in the December 14, 1901, issue of "The Leader", a short-lived bi-monthly Oneonta newspaper. Mr. Gardner prefaced his offerings with this remark: "Oneonta, with three railroads and another coming has become the banner town to buy real estate in".

The three railroads in Oneonta were the Delaware & Hudson, the Ulster & Delaware and the Oneonta, Cooperstown & Richfield Springs, an electric trolley line which was just beginning to push its way north, with Herkimer as its ultimate destination.

The "another coming" road was the Unadilla Valley Railroad which at the time ran 20 miles from New Berlin to Bridgewater. It was planned to extend the line from Bridgewater to Utica and from New Berlin to Oneonta by way of Morris. The extensions had been surveyed and it was thought in 1901 that the line would surely be built, giving Oneonta a 62-mile direct connection with Utica. Planning was as far as the project ever got, however.

The Gardner advertisement was not the only interesting one in the 1901 journal. F.S. Patridge, a Board Street wholesale and retail liquor dealer, offered "Hundreds of Miniature packages of assorted Liquors at 10 cents each or \$1.00 per dozen", as well as four full quarts of Old Valley rye for \$3.00. This seems like a tremendous bargain until it is realized that at the time \$3.00 represented 30 hours of labor for the average working man. Artisans of 1969 certainly pay no such price for their potables.

Eugene Shapley, at 262 Main Street next to Williams' market, had for sale popped corn in all forms, including buttered corn, crispettes and corn balls. His line also included hot roasted peanuts and every variety of tropical and domestic nuts. For a nickel you could give your teeth a good workout.

M. Gurney & Sons (Lous and Everett), which sold drygoods and carpets where the McPhail pharmacy now is, were advertising some great items to doll up your den or cozy corner. These included sofa pillows, armor and antique weapons and all manner of Indian, Arabian, Nubian and Oriental doodads.

Berman's, at 104 Main Street, advertised that it was the "Leading Steam Cleaning, Pressing and Repairing establishment in Central New York." Since we have no recollection of this outfit, we shall not dispute its claims. The Oneonta Paper Company set forth the merits of its Asbestos Table Cloth, made of asbestos and flannel and guaranteed to keep hot dishes from marring the polish on your table.

An ad which really said a mouthful was that of Dr. G.W. Thomas, whose dental office was in the Saunders (now Farone) block at the corner of Main and Broad. He would make for you "the best upper and lower artificial teeth for only \$12."

Ladies who wished to get a little tipsy in a genteel manner could go into the New York Store and buy Lydia Pinkham's Compound at 70 cents a bottle or Peruna at 68 cents. These medicines could also be used to preserve your appendix or as a varnish remover. Of course the advertisements did not mention the alternate uses for the compounds.

## WHO DISCOVERED AMERICA?

For years Christopher Columbus reigned supreme as the discoverer of America. Then rather conclusive evidence was offered to prove that Norsemen had reached North America several hundred years before the Genoan made his landfall in 1492. Since then everybody has been getting into the act. The Irish claim to have reached the New World before the Norsemen and the Jews claim to have beaten the men from Erin. The discoverer of America is now reputed to have been a Welshman.

Claims and counterclaims will undoubtedly continue to pile up but the cold fact is that the first men to reach our continent were neither Italian nor Irish, Hebrew nor Welsh. There is indisputable scientific evidence that Mongoloid Asiatics crossed into North America over a land bridge where Bering Strait is now during the last, or Wisconsin, period of glaciation about 25,000 years ago, and worked their way into the heart of the continent by way of the corridor between the northeast ice mass and that which covered the Rocky Mountain uplift. These nomadic hunters were the forbears of the American Indian.

During the Pleistocene age there was lush vegetation in the areas not covered by the ice masses and game animals abounded. This was the time of the mammoth and the mastodon, the ancient horse and the huge bison, deer, moose, elk and caribou.

These Paleo-Indians worked their way east, always on the hunt for the big animals of the period. Their artifacts have been found in New York State, not in abundance but in sufficient number to enable anthropologists to get an idea of the nature of the Paleo culture. A beautiful Clovis point about 10,000 years old was found on Crumhorn some years ago and is now in the Yager Museum at Hartwick College, which also contains several Folsom points, not so old by a few thousand years but still of the Paleo-Indian period.

Until a few years ago the matter of dating Indian artifacts involved some speculation and conjecture. Atomic experiments during and after World War II resulted in the Carbon 14 technique which enabled archeologists to date their specimens with a high degree of accuracy.

A faintly radioactive form of carbon, known as Carbon 14, is found in all living matter. This substance disintegrates at a fixed rate. For instance, a pound of Carbon 14 will be reduced to a half pound in 5,567 years, to a quarter in the same period of time and so on. When a tree or an animal dies it ceases to absorb Carbon 14 from the atmosphere but the amount it contains continues to disintegrate at the mathematically fixed rate.

By measuring the amount of Carbon 14 still remaining in the specimen the scientist can determine the time when a flint spearhead ended the life of an Ice Age elephant or a stone axe cut down a tree. If an artifact is found associated with the remains of an ancient mammal or near an old firepit, its age can be determined with considerable accuracy by measuring the amount of Carbon 14 left in the bones of the animal or in the charcoal.

Although many thousand Indian artifacts have been found in the Oneonta area, none was Carbon 14 tested until about two years ago when Dr. Bruce Raemsch, Hartwick College anthropologist, sent to Yale several pieces of charcoal found in an ancient firepit near Oneonta. One specimen was dated at 1490 B.C. and another at 900 B.C., give or take about 100 years.

## IT WAS 1919

Let's turn back the clock to a late May day in 1919, the beginning of the post-war decade which was to change unalterably and almost completely, the American way of life. War time austerity was over and the ten years ahead would be ones of unparalleled prosperity, high jinks and burgeoning crime.

We will look in on Mr. and Mrs. Jones, a young Oneonta businessman and his wife, who are eating breakfast. In the immemorial manner of husband, Mr. Jones has a copy of the morning paper, the Oneonta Daily Star, propped in front of him.

Mr. Jones is dressed much like a man of the present era except that his coat and trousers match, his shirt collar is detachable and he wears a vest. As he reads the paper he is smoking a cigarette, probably a Camel, Fatima or Sweet Caporal.

His wife's suit has a skirt which is rather tight at the ankles and hangs six inches from the floor. Her stockings are black or brown - flesh-colored hosiery would horrify her. Possibly she has used face powder but most certainly not lipstick, rouge or eye shadow. Her nails are well kept but not painted.

As the couple eat they discuss the news of the day. A referendum on whether to permit Sunday movies and baseball in Oneonta has resulted in a resounding "NO". Tony Pedrone has returned from service and has resumed his clerical duties in the Wilber National Bank. Word has been received that Lieutenant Raymond Tucker has left France on his way home. World War I has been over for some months but many Oneonta boys are still overseas or in camps in this country.

They discuss the high cost of living since everything is going up - food, clothing, rent and taxes. Milk has jumped since 1914 from nine to 15 cents a quart, sirloin steak from 27 to 42 cents a pound, butter from 32 to 61 cents a pound and eggs from 34 to 62 cents a dozen. It is becoming difficult to buy a man's suit for less than \$25 and shoes at \$4 a pair are getting hard to find.

The couple talks about the opening dance at the Country Club that evening and discusses the fact that Mrs. Charles Shelland will again manage the dining room. Zita of Albany will supply the music, playing such popular tunes as "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows", "Smiles", "Dardenella", "Hindustan" and "Japanese Sandman." There will be no cocktail parties preceding the affair. Oneonta has been bone dry for a year under local option and national prohibition will start on July 1. There will probably be some illicit liquor at the party although the manufacture of bathtub gin was as yet an infant industry.

After a few dances they and some of their friends will probably play auction (not contract as yet) bridge or discuss such best sellers of the day as "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse," Tarkington's "The Magnificent Ambersons", Brand Whitlock's "Belgium", and Conrad's "Arrow of Gold."

After the dance they will drive home in their Model T Ford after Mr. Jones has succeeded in starting it. Before he can dash back to the driver's seat to change the position of the spark and throttle levers from ten minutes of three to twenty-five of two, the motor will konk out at least once or twice.

There will be no late radio news to listen to when they reach home because it will be a full year before Westinghouse will start the first broadcasting studio in history, Station KDKA at East Pittsburg.

## THE GOLDEN AGE OF RADIO

From 1928 until 1943, during the period from 7 to 7:45 p.m. five nights a week, business in Oneonta was almost at a standstill, with the streets practically deserted. Everyone who could make it was within earshot of a radio receiver for that was the time when Amos and Andy were on the air and who in all America wanted to miss that program?

Would Ruby recover from her illness? She had better, said the listeners, or they would boycott the sponsor's products. Would Madame Queen make her breach of promise suit against Andy stick? Worry over the outcome of that fracas caused dozens of nervous breakdowns.

Do you remember the Kingfish, Brother Crawford and Arabella? How about Jessica Dragonette and Ronald Werrenrath, the Happiness Boys and Mollie Goldberg? Can you recall the A.& P. Gypsies, the Cliquot Club Eskimos and the Ipana Troubadours? Do the names of Graham McNamee, Ted Husing and Norman Brokenshire bring back memories?

In all probability there are more radios in America today than ever before and the listening audience is doubtless at an all time high, what with the millions of transistor and car radios. Notwithstanding, the Golden Age of Radio is over. The programming is different today, with more emphasis on news and the live broadcasting of events. TV has taken over the prime evening hours when the great radio bands, soap operas and comedy programs used to entertain millions.

Russell Brigham brought radio to Oneonta, setting up a wireless station in 1913 for the reception of time signals. Government regulations compelled the jeweler to dismantle the apparatus during World War I. In 1919, after the end of the war, Mr. Brigham installed a crystal set, the first wireless telephone in the county.

He next acquired a DeForest Ultraudion, the first detector with vacuum tubes. With this, on July 2, 1921, he heard the Dempsey-Carpentier fight, the first sport broadcast in history. The next year he secured a General Electric receiving and broadcasting set which he installed in the basement of his home. Many Oneontans, including this writer, were initiated into the mysteries of radio in the Brigham cellar.

Mr. Brigham held the first amateur radio license in the county and did the first broadcasting, some 20 years before WDOS went on the air. Among other early enthusiasts were Arnold Wildgrube and Lee Crouch. The latter manufactured a good radio set, the Claradyne, in Oneonta for years.

Once Station KDKA in Pittsburgh had begun regular broadcasts, to be followed by WGY, WJZ, WEAF, WOR, and WBZ, the radio craze spread fast in Oneonta. We recall that the first set we owned was an RCA Superheterodyne, battery operated and with separate loudspeaker. We considered it a bargain at \$325.

Early broadcasting was beset with difficulties. Before channels were assigned by the government funny things happened on the air. Once Billy Sunday was delivering one of his hellfire and brimstone sermons over a New York station. He shouted to his unseen audience: "Brothers and sisters, I ask you what Jonah said to that whale." And then, immediately, listeners heard the announcer of another station say: "Take Carter's Little Liver Pills."

Those were great days and nights when radio was king of the entertainment world.

## LIFE WAS DIFFERENT THEN

A young student once asked us if the Roaring Twenties resembled the Gay Nineties. Our answer was that, although the two decades had some points in common insofar as human conduct was concerned, the nonsense of the later period permeated all classes of society whereas the high jinks of the time around the turn of the century were performed by the wealthy.

Let's take a look at some aspects of the years between 1900 and 1905, which, to all intents and purposes, were a part of the Gay Nineties. Actually 1900 was the last year of the 19th century and not the first of the 20th but few people believed that and the night of December 31, 1899, was the noisiest and wildest New Year's Eve in history. Bands played, whistles tooted, bells rang and glee clubs sang in the streets to usher in the brave new century.

It was the epoch of the Robber Barons and their palaces along Fifth Avenue in the Big Town, the time when the Astors, the Belmonts and the Vanderbilts, the Morgans, the Hydes and the Goelets were vying for social leadership and were giving parties that cost, in some instances, as much as a quarter of a million dollars. There were less wealthy people in the country, however - 76 million of them - and they were leading quite a different life.

The automobile, the telephone, the phonograph, the electric light, the motion picture, all had been invented but as yet were in their infancy. There were only ten motor cars in Oneonta in 1904 and less than that number of houses were wired for electricity. Only one person in 66 in the country had a telephone and long distance lines were almost non-existent.

Baseball had been played for many years but it did not really become the national pastime until the turn of the century. The first World Series was played in 1903 between the Boston Pilgrims and the Pittsburg Pirates. The baseball stars of that period are legends now: John McGraw, Christy Mathewson and Iron Man McGinnity; Three Finger Brown, Cy Young and the young Ty Cobb.

Newspapers did not have sports pages in those days and accounts of ball games and prize fights appeared wherever they could be fitted into the makeup. The Star had no real sports page until the early 1920s when, as city editor, we persuaded the owner, Harry W. Lee, to try one out.

Wages were low around the turn of the century with a dollar a day a good wage for a working man but prices were also low. In 1900 sugar was four cents a pound and butter 24 cents. You could get a fine meal in the cities for 20 cents and hotel rooms were \$1 a day. Salesgirls were earning \$5 a week and in the city sweatshops \$2.50 was the going wage.

The practice of medicine in 1900 was far from its present day sophistication. The doctors were dedicated and their skill was constantly improving but they had little to work with. Diabetes, pneumonia, diphtheria and smallpox were frequently fatal in the absence of drugs which could control them. The average life span for men was 49 years and for women 51.

It was a somber age in some respects and yet it was a happy one in others. Progress had been tremendous during the 19th century but no one living in 1900 could imagine in his wildest dreams what changes the next 100 years would bring.

## THAT FAMOUS PINEAPPLE CHEESE

"I want the finest cheese you have," said an Oneonta tourist to a waiter in a famous restaurant in Switzerland some years ago. During the wait while his order was being prepared, the traveler wondered what gastronomic delight would be placed before him. Would it be an Edam cheese from Holland, French Neufchatel, Gorgonzola from Italy or an exotic Swiss variety?

Presently, to the vast amazement and delight of the Oneontan, the waiter served him a Pineapple cheese, made in little old Milford, Otsego County, New York. He had had to travel several thousand miles to discover that a cheese made in his own backyard was regarded as one of the world's choice varieties.

For nearly a half century O.A. Weatherly & Co. turned out about five hundred Pineapple cheeses a day in addition to innumerable wheels of fine American or "store" cheese. Most vicinity grocery stores carried Pineapple cheese but outside the local territory most of the product went to dealers in fancy groceries and to such wholesalers of quality foods as S.A. Pearce of Boston.

Oscar. A. Weatherly started the manufacture of cheese in Norwich in 1896 and moved the plant to Milford about 1900. Stuart D. Haight, born on the Otsdawa, married into the family and joined the firm, which was incorporated as O.A. Weatherly & Co. in 1917. Upon Weatherly's death, Mr. Haight took over the management of the busy concern.

Pineapple cheese was so named not because its taste resembled that of the tropical fruit but since it was made in the shape and general appearance of a pineapple. The cheese inside the hard, shellacked shell was pinkish-orange in color and had an indescribably delicious taste, totally unlike that of any other cheese.

We asked Mr. Haight to tell us the trade secret of how this unique taste was achieved but he had no answer. He knew that it came from the unusual method of curing and aging for about six months but beyond that he could not say.

The manufacture of Pineapple cheese started out much as did that of American cheese. A little more rennet was added, however, which gave the curd a firmer consistency. In the heating stage a temperature of 104 degrees was maintained instead of the usual 100 degrees.

After the cooking and fermentation processes the cheese was stuffed into iron molds shaped like a pineapple and pressure was applied. This squeezed the whey out of the curd and formed the cheese into its final shape but left it with a smooth exterior.

The cheeses were then dipped in hot water to soften the surface and hung from hooks in individual nets which had been crocheted in a diamond pattern. After a month or six weeks, during which the net design was impressed into the cheese, giving it a pineapple-like appearance, the cheeses were shellacked and placed on trenchers for another period of aging. They came in four sizes: mediums, picnics, and large and small gems.

Mr. Haight sold the business in 1944 to the Dairymen's League which later disposed of the Pineapple cheese branch to a Wisconsin cheese company. He told us that he had sampled this company's product and found it vastly inferior to the original variety. It is not believed that Pineapple cheese is now made.

## THE FAMOUS POND LILY HOUSE

For nearly two centuries, in good times and bad, through the many changes that time has wrought, the time-worn building has stood there. When it was erected, the busy thoroughfare which it now faces was hardly more than a path cut through the dense hemlock forest. In its early days the Susquehanna ran only a couple of hundred yards away: now the river is a mile or so distant.

In its first days, when it was a frontier tavern, its public rooms rang with song and laughter while in the big ballroom on the second floor there was "revelry by night" during the years when George Washington was completing his first term as president.

But all buildings, like all men, eventually pass on and the days of the ancient Pond Lily Hotel on Oneida Street, the oldest structure in the town of Oneonta, are numbered. Soon the historic building will be razed to make room for an automobile agency.

The hotel was erected in 1789 by a man named Westcott from Milford. The Scramling sawmill, the first in the town of Oneonta, was not yet in operation and it is probable that Westcott boated his building material down the Susquehanna from Milford. At this time the river flowed close to the base of the bluff at the Plains and hence was not far from the site on which Westcott built.

John Culley was the first man to operate the inn and the small general store located in the easterly front corner room on the first floor. At this time the ballroom extended along the whole front of the second floor. In 1792 Joseph McDonald bought the tavern and store and operated them until 1796 when he sold to his brother James and moved up the valley to build a grist and sawmills near what is now the corner of Main and River Streets. After a few years James sold the building to Jacob I. Cuyler and succeeded his brother as owner of the mills.

Cuyler, a namesake of a famous former mayor of Albany, operated the place for some years in the first decade of the 19th century and it was here that his wife met a tragic and mysterious death in December of 1805.

Early one morning the Stoughton Alger family, living then on a farm near the foot of Babcock Hollow (Winney Hill Road), was awakened by the blasts of a horn, repeated again and again and coming from the direction of the tavern. The Algers, as well as other neighbors, hurried to the inn, where Cuyler showed them the body of his wife lying on the bedroom floor with the throat cut from ear to ear. There was a razor nearby.

Cuyler claimed that his wife had committed suicide but there were those who thought that he had murdered her. The suicide theory was generally accepted, however. The bedroom remained unoccupied for years and it is said that 100 years later the blood stains could still be seen on the pine flooring.

In subsequent years the building had a checkered history. At times it was a respectable hotel and at intervals a private dwelling. During our youth the Pond Lily and Shadyside, on the corner of Chestnut and Oneida, were known as houses of ill repute.

During the years the structure has been added to and its appearance has been altered many times. The wreckers, however, will find somewhere in the rambling building the skeleton of the original frontier tavern and store, built 178 years ago.

## AN OLD TIME CHRISTMAS

Let's go back to around the turn of the century and see what Christmas, as well as ordinary living, were like in that far off time.

Oneonta was far from a sleepy country village in those days. Business was booming on the railroads and about 15 million cigars were being hand-rolled annually in the village of about 7,000 inhabitants. The prevailing wage for a laboring man was ten cents an hour but prices were low and the person who earned \$10 or \$12 a week got along very nicely.

Christmas in those days was pretty much for the children and they looked forward to it with great anticipation. There was not the wholesale exchange of gifts between adults that there is today and the Christmas card was virtually unknown. About every child believed in Santa Claus, all the more so because he never saw the merry old gentleman except in imagination.

Toys were limited in variety. There were sleds and skates and sooner or later every boy got a small steam engine and a spring-driven train of cars but they were about the only mechanical toys available.

Children's books were few in number and drably printed but avidly read nevertheless. There were paper soldiers and lead soldiers but the elaborate miniatures of instruments of death now given to children were entirely lacking.

The first automobile came to Oneonta in 1900 and it was regarded as a passing fad with a limited use. Most certainly it would never replace the horse and buggy. The phonograph was a decided novelty and there were no movies. The airplane had not yet been invented and if a person had predicted that some day man would travel in outer space and plan a trip to the moon he would have been regarded as being under lunar influence and would doubtless have ended up in an asylum.

Radio and television were years in the future. The scientific principles behind these wonders were but dimly understood and by only a few people like Edison, Marconi and Charles Edgar Fritts, a native Oneontan.

Oneonta had had electricity for several years but it was used as an illuminating agent by only a handful of householders. Most stores were wired but very few homes, the main reliance being upon manufactured gas, which, in the days of the inefficient carbon filament lamp, gave much better light than electricity, especially when the Welsbach burner was used. An Oneonta man, Howard Lyon of the Normal faculty, assisted in the development of this type of gas burner.

The electrical appliances which are now found in great variety in nearly every home, were unknown at the turn of the century. There were no electric heaters, toasters, blankets, coffee makers, irons, razors, or vacuum cleaners. Your mother did her cooking on a coal range, her ironing with a sad-iron and her cleaning with broom and mop. Your father trimmed his beard and mustache with scissors and straight razor or let the barber do it.

What did people do for pleasure in the evenings? The average male went to his club, his lodge or his favorite tavern while his wife stayed home with the kids, reading, playing games or perhaps singing around the McCammon piano, made right here in Oneonta.

The common man fares better today than he did of yore but whether he is happier is a question we will leave to the philosophers.

## A D.&H. FIRST

The seven ton Stourbridge Lion, the first steam locomotive to bear the D.&H. label, was a far cry from the mighty 1500s with their 600,000 pounds of weight and with 285 pounds of boiler pressure actuating their 12 69-inch driving wheels. However, the Lion had a distinction not borne by its tremendously powerful successors - it was the first steam locomotive to run on rails in America.

The gravity railroad between Olyphant, Carbondale and Honesdale, Pa., which the engine was built to serve, had its genesis in the Delaware & Hudson Canal, built in 1825-28 to carry coal from the fields in northeastern Pennsylvania to Roundout on the Hudson and thence down the river to New York.

The Moasic Mountains separated Honesdale, one terminus of the canal, from the coal fields around Carbondale and a way had to be found to cross this range of hills. The canal could not be carried over the barrier because of the great number of locks required, so a gravity railroad was devised.

This would consist of five inclined planes on the west side of the mountains and three descending inclines, connected by three almost level stretches, from the summit to the canal basin at Honesdale on the east side. Stationary steam engines would haul cars up the western slope while a braking mechanism would lower the cars down the other side.

On the comparatively level intervals between the descending planes it was planned to use steam locomotives, which were already in fairly sucessful operation in England. It had been figured out that four engines could operate for \$41.30 a day while the horses required to pull the cars would cost \$71.87 a day to keep.

Horatio Allen was sent to England to contract for the locomotives and for scrap iron rails. He ordered one engine from George Stephenson, the father of the steam locomotive, and three from the Stourbridge firm of Foster, Rastrick & Co. All four were eventually shipped to America but only the Stourbridge Lion was ever given a trial.

The Lion, whose delivered price was \$2,914.90, arrived in New York on May 13, 1829. After it had been exhibited for a month in Gotham the machine was shipped up the Hudson and over the D.&H. canal to Honesdale. On August 8 Allen guided its historic three mile journey to Seeleyville, going en route over a curving trestle 30 feet high.

The track was laid on 6x9 inch hemlock ties placed 10 feet apart. The 6x12 inch wooden rails had iron straps  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide and  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick fastened with countersunk screws to their inside edges to provide a wearing surface.

The little engine performed admirably on the trial run, which nevertheless was a failure since the roadbed was deemed too light and too poorly braced to carry the weight and the thrust of the locomotive. Another trial a month later confirmed Allen's belief that the roadbed was unsafe.

The Stourbridge Lion was stored in Honesdale for about 20 years and then taken to Carbondale where the boiler was put to work in the company shops. An exact replica of the historic engine was built at the D.&H. shops at Colonie in 1933 and sent to the Century of Progress Exposition at Chicago. We believe that it is still on display in that city.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Does Oneonta mean "stony place" or "place of open rocks"? Is the Susquehanna the "river of long reaches" or just a "muddy stream"? Does Otsego mean "head of the river", "place of meeting" or "place of cloud or storms"?

No definite answers can be given to these or to other questions concerning the meaning of other place names in the area which were derived from Iroquois or Algonquin words. The Indian tongues were not written languages and the white man often erred in putting them on paper. Consequently in most cases the original Indian names and their significance are lost. The best the historian can do is to use his judgement as to which interpretation is the most authoritative.

According to James Taylor Dunn, former librarian of the New York State Historical Association, Oneonta is the "stony place". However, Willard Huntington an acknowledged authority on the Indians of this area, interprets the name as meaning "place of open rocks", referring either to the outcropping on Chestnut Street known as the Table Rocks or the area at East End where the Ingalls stone quarry formerly operated. There may be a distinction without a difference here but we are inclined to favor Yager's pronouncement.

Otsego is undoubtedly a corruption of the Mohawk word Otesaga, which, according to Dunn, meant "place of cloud or storms". James Fenimore Cooper made popular another translation, "place of meeting", but this interpretation is generally discredited. Yager said it meant "head of the river".

The Iroquois called our river the Gwanawanagunda, or "great island river". Susquehanna is the Algonquin designation and probably means "river of the long reaches", although Dr. William Beauchamp, an authority on Indian names, said that it means "muddy stream". It is our thought that in Algonquin times the stream carried less sediment than it does today and was probably less turgid. No matter what its meaning, however, the name is a beautiful one, perhaps rivalled only by Shenandoah.

Schenevus is another disputed name. Ske-ne-vas, a famous chief in legend, was undoubtedly an Indian trapper who lived in the vicinity but Beauchamp does not call him a chieftain and Willard V. Huntington, who was thoroughly versed in the folklore of the section, mentions neither him nor the stories which have been associated with his name. Dunn says that the Indian name means "where corn is hoed early" while other authorities think that it means "speckled fish". In any event it is a delightful name and its exact meaning matters little.

Unadilla, another beautiful word, comes from the Oneida tongue. It has been translated as "pleasant valley" but the true meaning is most probably "meeting of the waters", the reference being to the confluence of the Unadilla and Susquehanna Rivers.

There are other place names whose origin is lost to history, among them Crumhorn. And who was Lena, the lady after whom a small settlement west of Hartwick, was named? How did Welcome, a tiny hamlet near Lena, get its designation? In olden times there was Toot Huddle, now Fall Bridge; Sodom Point, which was changed to South Hartwick; Bulldog, now Gilbertsville; and Dogtown, now known as Bowerstown. What was the origin of the original names?

## TROUBLE, TROUBLE!

The fathers of the village of Mohawk were determined that their community would be the terminus of the Oneonta, Cooperstown & Richfield Springs electric railroad and not just a way station between Oneonta and Herkimer so they refused permission to join the rails with those of the Utica & Mohawk Valley Railroad, over which the OC & RS cars were to run to Herkimer.

Promotor Herbert Jennings secured court permission to make the connection and on October 16, 1904, a crew started work at the corner of Main and Columbia Streets in Mohawk where the OC & RS met the U & MV. A crowd started to gather and by noon several hundred people ringed the corner. A fire hose had been connected to a nearby hydrant and presently a spray of water drenched the workers:

Sheriff Richards and two brawny workmen fought their way to the hydrant and shut off the water as sticks, stones and shovels filled the air. A group of men rushed the workers but fell back when a score of stilettos flashed from the pockets of the swarthy laborers. Order was restored and work continued but was stopped late in the afternoon when Jennings was served with an injunction which had been secured by the Mohawk board of trustees.

By the next morning the energetic promotor had succeeded in having the injunction lifted and martial law declared. The rails were then joined under the protection of a detail of armed National Guardsmen. After six years of almost constant trouble the Susquehanna and Mohawk valleys were at last united.

The road was only 56 miles long but every conceivable kind of difficulty had accompanied its construction. There had been wash-outs, cave-ins, strikes, riots and accidents of every description. During its quarter century of existence there would be frequent changes of management and several changes of name but tens of thousands of passengers would ride its cars and a surprising amount of freight would be carried.

Trouble started in July of 1898 when the Oneonta & Otsego Valley Railroad, which ran on several Oneonta streets and to West Oneonta, made its first trip. Something went wrong at the powerhouse on Market Street and the energy flowing from the dynamo knocked out about every telephone in town. The telephone people secured an injunction forbidding the operation of the line until the difficulty could be remedied and this caused several days delay.

The line reached Richfield Spring in 1902 but there was strong opposition to having the tracks go along the village streets (horses would be frightened and life endangered) and a riot like the one at Mohawk nearly occurred.

In June of 1903 while the road was being pushed northward out of Richfield the workmen became incensed because they had not been paid in over a month and blocked the tracks on each side of Richfield. This impasse continued for two weeks.

Another dispute over back wages caused a pitched battle south of Hartwick between laborers and company officials reinforced by peace officers. In this sanguinary encounter the leader of the rioters was shot to death and several persons were wounded.

These are but a few of the troublesome incidents which occurred during the building of an interurban line which was to bring prosperity to a wide region.

## BACK IN 1906

The firemen didn't have to go far to locate the blaze on that mild March night in 1906. It was in their own building, a two story wooden structure on the site of the present Municipal Building.

It was a stubborn little fire and before it was out the uniforms of the Lewis Hose company and the village band had been ruined and considerable damage done to the rear of the building. Repairs were quickly made but that was a bit of a waste for within two months the structure would be hurriedly razed to provide a firebreak for the conflagration which would level the Wilber Bank building on the corner of South Main Street and the two blocks next west.

What else was happening in the pleasant village of about 8,000 souls just three score and three years ago? The firemen had to fight another blaze the night their building was damaged. They were rolling up the hose when a fire broke out in the wooden block east of the Briggs & Miller mill (grounds of the old postoffice).

The fire badly damaged the structure, owned by Domenico Chicorelli and occupied by his shoe repair shop, the meat market of John J. Byard and the grocery store of Mrs. L.K. Hennessey. The volunteer firemen labored hard to keep the flames from spreading to the adjoining sawmill and carpenter shop.

Dr. Merton L. Ford had just received the first 1906 model automobile in town. It was a big fast Oles, with four cylinders generating 30 horsepower. This splendid machine cost \$2,250. Maybe the horseless carriage was here to stay.

The citizens of the village had just voted on four propositions: (1) to raise by taxes \$3,500 for new fire apparatus and supplies; (2) to raise by taxes \$1,000 for fire department maintenance; (3) to bond for \$4,800 to pay the village share of paving upper Main Street; (4) to bond for \$3,500 for the village share of a Chestnut Street sewer and its continuation to the river.

The fire department got its money but the two bond issues were turned down. The A.L. Kellogg Hook & Ladder Company, of which your deponent was a proud mascot, at once ordered a new truck to cost \$2,100. This was said to be the finest piece of equipment of its kind in the state.

The original metropolitan cast played "The County Chairman" to an SRO audience at the Oneonta Theatre. Three special trolleys brought scores of spectators from Cooperstown, Hartwick and Richfield Springs.

The trolley company announced that, beginning at 6:05 a.m. and continuing until 10:35 p.m., cars would leave East End for the Normal School and West End at 15, 35 and 55 minutes after each hour and that the return trips would leave the Main Street station at 5, 25 and 45 minutes after the hour.

Plans were being made for a baseball team at Oneonta High School, the first in the history of the institution. And speaking of schools, citizens were debating the advisability of having the state take over the Center Street School as a teacher training facility. It did become a part of the Normal School and was so operated until 1933.

The ads of the period were intriguing. C.C. Colburn was offering men's suits at \$10 to \$20, the Oneonta Department Store advertised six cakes of laundry soap for 10 cents and apron gingham for 6 cents a yard while Willahan's Bakery had wheat, graham, rye and Vienna bread at 5 cents a loaf and biscuits for 5 cents a dozen.

## THE SLOUGHTERS OF SCHOHARIE

There was a day when children up in Schoharie county had their mouths washed out with soap for saying "Sloughter". Maybe they still do, for we have a hunch that the word is still a dirty one in the beautiful valley which was the granary of the Revolution.

Back in colonial days an English governor of the province by the name of Sloughter was so cruel and unjust in the eyes of the Palatine settlers of the Schoharie Valley that they came to use his name as a term of opprobrium and that custom has continued to the present day. If you ask a resident of the area for a definition of the word, you might get an answer like this: "Sloughter means a no 'count so-and-so, only more so.'" We have changed the wording slightly so as not to offend the innocent.

There is another meaning to the word, however. About two miles south of Middleburg on the west side of the river, a mountain with precipitous sides, called Vrooman's Nose, stands in the middle of the valley. Near its eastern rim a road winds westward by the side of Lime Kiln Creek. On the sides of the narrow ravine through which it cuts were once the ramshackle dwellings of a strange people known as Sloughters.

Underprivileged and anti-social they were, but fiercely independent and intensely loyal to their own breed. In many ways they resembled the "pore white trash" of the Tennessee mountains, the Caleboguers of the Genesee country or the denizens of Aliger Hill between Oneonta and the Gifford Hill area.

They lived a precarious, brawling existence in the hills and hidden valleys of that part of Schoharie county. For years they were dominated by a fierce old lady named Polly Scrom who possessed some of the acquisitive characteristics but little of the intelligence of Rhoda Loomis, who was the brains behind the infamous Loomis Gang of Nine Mile Swamp. The gulch which housed the tribe is still known as Poll's Holler.

Thirty years ago the Sloughters were much in evidence. The automobile has lessened their isolation, however, and modern civilization is reaching into their section, which was once a world unto itself. Nevertheless, we understand that the breed still exists. If some hens come up missing or a donnybrook blossoms in a country tavern, the Sloughters are pretty apt to be blamed.

The folk tales concerning the Sloughters are only a small part of the vast body of legend concerning Schoharie county, one of the most interesting regions in the state, or, for that matter anywhere. No section in the country has had a more independent life than the broad and beautiful valley of the Schoharie, once the feed box of the Continental armies. Shut in by the Catskills to the south, the Helderbergs to the east and the bordering hills of the Mohawk to the north, it has been the haven of the oppressed for generations.

It is said that a Mohawk chief, exiled for marrying an Algonquin, found asylum there and became the head of a band of other Indian outlaws. Then came the German Palatines and after them, the Dutch and the English, the Scots and the Irish.

Because main lines of travel do not cut through the valley, the Schoharie towns preserve the colonial atmosphere perhaps better than any other area in the state. Schoharie county is thoroughly modern but it is also thoroughly delightful - and there is a difference.

## THE OLDEST ARTIFACT

What is the oldest object in Oneonta made by man? Perhaps you think that it's the shawl which your ancestor brought over on the Mayflower or that chair which some craftsman in New England fashioned 300 years ago. If that is your thinking, you are wrong by quite a few thousand years.

In the Yager Museum at Hartwick College the other day we took a long re-look at the most ancient specimen of the handicraft of homo sapiens found in this vicinity. It is a Clovis javelin point laboriously fashioned out of a chunk of brown jasper about 10,000 years ago by a Paleo-Indian, one of a small group of aborigines who hunted these hills and valleys around 7,000 B.C.

Clovis points (so called because the prototypes were found near Clovis, New Mexico) are very rare, only four having been discovered in Otsego county and but 112 in all of New York state. The one in the Yager Museum was found by Rowan Spraker of Cooperstown on the west flank of Crumhorn Mountain.

This point is about three inches long, is beautifully formed of Berks county, Pennsylvania, brown jasper and bears the fluting which is characteristic of this form of artifact. The reason for the fluting has aroused some conjecture.

Dr. William A. Ritchie, New York State archeologist, states in his latest book: "It is alleged to have possessed a peculiar and still undetermined advantage in the killing of big game, chiefly proboscidians." We have a theory, which we find is shared by some archeologists, that the fluting is a blood groove such as is found on a modern knife bayonet, its purpose being to facilitate the withdrawal of the blade from the live object hit.

The Paleo-Indian was a big game hunter and nearly all of the artifacts which he left have been discovered along the water courses and the borders of ancient lakes where the huge animals were found. There is an almost complete absence of artifacts in such areas as the Adirondack and Catskill mountains.

It is believed that this ancient man came into our section of New York State when the last glacier was retreating. Studies of fossil tree pollens obtained by core borings reveal that the tree covering was largely fir and spruce, the forests being separated from the ice front by a narrow strip of park tundra.

The game animals available were the mastodon and mammoth, the giant beaver and large deer, elk and caribou. Remains of all these creatures have been found in Pleistocene deposits of New York State. It is significant that a map showing the distribution of Pleistocene mammals found in the state corresponds pretty much to a map indicating the incidence of Paleo-Indian artifacts.

The fluted Clovis points found along the courses of the Susquehanna, Delaware, Hudson and Walkill rivers are for the most part made of Pennsylvania yellow, brown or red jasper. Artifacts from the central and northern areas of the state are largely of high grade Coxsackie or Onondaga flint, while in the western counties points of Ohio chalcedony have been discovered.

No identifiable skeletal remains of these people have been found and probably none ever will be. All we know about them has been derived from a study of the nature of their artifacts, which are mostly projectile points but also include a few cutting, scraping and boring tools which would indicate that they once worked with wood, bone and leather. Whatever they fashioned of these materials has long since returned to dust.

## FOUNDING OF DELAWARE

The pleasant Dutch village of Hurley in Ulster county wasn't exactly a metropolis but it was much too crowded for four of its good burghers. They could see the homes of their nearest neighbors and that made the place stuffy.

Accordingly, in the summer of 1762 Johannes VanWaggoner, Peter Hendricks and the brothers Hermanus and Peter Dumond, having heard of the pleasant aspect of the valley of the West Branch of the Delaware, crossed the mountains and exploited the territory around what is now Margaretville. They were pleased with what they saw and upon their return to Hurley they made arrangements with Chancellor Livingston to purchase four farms at 20 shillings an acre.

The quartet returned to the Middletown flats early in 1763, bringing their families and settling upon their new homesteads to become the first permanent white settlers in what is now Delaware county. Other families followed and there was a considerable community, called Pakatakan, by the time the events of the Revolution drove the settlers out.

Three other settlements in the present Delaware county were made prior to the Revolution - Colchester, Harpersfield and Sidney. Timothy Gregory came into Colchester from Westchester county in 1766 and built a log cabin on the east side of the Delaware. This was the focus of a settlement of nine dwellings when the war broke out.

Harpersfield was not settled until 1771 but it had its real beginning in 1766 when John Harper and his son, Colonel John Harper, obtained permission from the royal governor to purchase 100,000 acres of land near the headquarters of the Delaware river, from the Indians. The deed was signed in 1769 and two years later Colonel Harper brought his family from Cherry Valley, where his grandfather had settled in 1754.

Sidney was settled in 1772 by Rev. William Johnston, who came into the section from his home near Albany by way of Otsego Lake and the Susquehanna. He was soon followed by the Sliter, Carr, Woodcock and Dingman families.

The area that is now Delaware county was until 1797 a part of Ulster and Otsego counties. Persons who lived south of the West Branch of the Delaware found it necessary to go to Kingston to transact their legal business while those on the north side of the river were compelled to travel to Cooperstown.

Delaware county was planned by a group of citizens in 1794 but it was three years later before the legislature enacted the necessary measure. The only townships in the county when it was created were Harpersfield, Middletown, Colchester, Franklin, Stamford and Walton, the other 12 towns being taken later from parts of the older townships.

The supervisors of the new county held their first meeting on May 30, 1797, at the home of Gideon Frisbee at the junction of Elk Creek and the West Branch on the present Delhi-Stamford road. As the courthouse in Delhi was not built until 1798, the first session of the Court of Common Pleas was also held at the Frisbee house. The structure is now owned by the Delaware County Historical Society and is used as a museum and meeting place.

## WEST SHORE RAILROAD

The West Shore Road had nary a locomotive nor a boxcar; it owned not a foot of rail nor a single tie and yet it scared the cinders out of the Cooperstown & Susquehanna Railroad whose course it paralleled from the Junction to the county seat.

Somewhat of an anachronism in the Age of Steam, the West Shore Road was a stage line of horses and wagons devised by David Wilber back in the 1880s out of pique and a stubborn determination to show that he could not be pushed around.

Oneontans in later years discovered in George I. Wilber the same trait of character that actuated his father, David - an iron will that could not and would not brook opposition.

It all started when the Albany & Susquehanna Railroad reached Oneonta in 1865. Cooperstown wanted a line to connect with it. The townships of Otsego and Middlefield were bonded for \$200,000 and \$50,000, respectively, and rails were laid from the county seat to Cooperstown Junction, the road opening in 1869 as the Cooperstown & Susquehanna Valley.

Andrew Shaw was elected president and David Wilber, then a Milford banker and the biggest hop grower in the state, became a director. For some years things went along smoothly with Wilber exercising a potent influence in the management of the road, just as George I. was to act later in respect to the Delaware & Hudson, successor to the Albany & Susquehanna.

In 1884 Judge Edwin Harris of Cooperstown became president of the road and began the task of unseating Shaw and Wilber, whom he accused of favoritism in the setting of freight rates. In particular he charged that Wilber paid smaller freight rates than did his competitors in the hop business.

There ensued a bitter struggle for control of town meetings where the railroad commissioners (who chose the directors) were elected. There was considerable buying of votes by each side. Harris won the struggle and Shaw and Wilber were ousted as directors.

Hurt and angered, Wilber went into action immediately and in characteristic manner. He went to Canada and purchased 20 of the finest draft horses he could find in the Dominion. The best harness made was bought and sturdy double-decker Studebaker wagons were acquired.

When the equipment had been assembled an office was opened in Wilber's private bank in Milford and business was solicited at rates lower than the railroad was offering. Among the drivers in this unique transportation system were David's brothers, Ira and Aaron Wilber, Joseph Quick, Abram Russ, Mark Bunker, Zara Campbell and Frank Tipple.

The road went up the east side of the river from Cooperstown Junction to Portlandville and then crossed over and proceeded up the west shore to the county seat. Coal and manufactured articles comprised most of the freight from the Junction to Cooperstown while hops and other farm produce were carried on the return trip.

The West Shore Road was not in existence long but during its short span of life it took dollars out of the pockets of the railroad directors and put gray hairs on their heads. David Wilber had made his point.

## HOSPITAL WAS NEEDED

With the horses at a gallop, the ambulance swung up Main Street toward the small, yellow brick hospital on the low hill overlooking Main Street. Very soon the D.&H. trainman, who had been injured while working on the northbound hump, would be on the table in the tiny operating room and Dr. Arthur Cutler and his staff would be trying to save his badly mangled arm.

It was late in 1901 and the Aurelia Osborn Fox Memorial Hospital had been open only a few weeks. A year earlier the patient would have been taken to a doctor's office and the operation would have been performed on a leather covered examining table under conditions which would have made it difficult to have saved the man's arm and, perhaps, even his life.

The other day we visited the hospital which has grown mightily through the years and the end of whose expansion is not yet in sight. Our mind went back to two occasions many years before. We thought first of October 5, 1900, when the cornerstone of the building was laid. We were only five years old at the time but we remember clearly the huge parade, which went down Walnut Street past our home at the corner of Dietz. We stood on the lawn with our mother and tried to spot our father who was one of the hundreds of marching Knights Templar.

Our mind then went back to 1909 when dad spent many weeks in the hospital following an operation. We visited him every day and got a pretty good idea of what the institution was like. There were 22 beds then; now there are more than 150. There was no x-ray equipment, no provision for physio-therapy and no laboratory facilities. Nevertheless the hospital was well staffed and equipped for its time. Interestingly, our father's private room was only \$15 per week.

Oneonta really had need for a hospital in 1900. Most illnesses were then treated in the home and almost all babies were delivered there but the village was a booming railroad center and in that day there were few safety devices and accidents in the shops and in the sprawling classification yards were frequent. Hardly a day passed without one or more men being injured to a greater or less extent.

In 1895 local doctors started a small hospital in a private home on High Street but there were few beds and the surgical facilities were very limited. And then in 1899, Aurelia Osborn Fox died and her husband gave \$10,000 for the construction of a hospital in her memory. In other stories we have told about Reuben L. Fox, a handsome and dashing young Union cavalry lieutenant who came to Oneonta at the close of the Civil War and started a mercantile business with L.S. Osborn, and of how he married the beautiful daughter of his partner. He became immersed in Republican politics and rose to a position of power in the state party. Shrewd investments netted him a sizeable fortune.

Reuben L. Fox died in 1909 and left his residuary estate to the hospital, which eventually realized about \$230,000 from his benevolence. It was a small acorn which he planted in 1900 but the oak which resulted is growing mightier year by year.

## A TALE OF CHERRY VALLEY

The Mohawk Indian has been depicted as a fighter of great ferocity and skill and the implacable foe of the white man and so he was, but only after he had been pushed out of his hunting grounds, had been given firearms and had been debauched by the fire water of the pale face. Before that time the settlers had seen many examples of the innate kindness of the redskin.

The humanity of a Mohawk warrior saved the lives of the family of the first permanent settler in Otsego county. John Lindsay, a Scot who had fled his native land to escape the vengeance of the enemies of the Stuarts, obtained in 1738 a patent of 18,000 acres around what is now Cherry Valley from George Clark, lieutenant-governor of the province of New York, and immediately settled upon his acres with his wife, his father-in-law, Lieutenant Congreve, and a few servants.

Lindsay had been Naval Officer of the Port of New York as well as sheriff of Albany county. The locality where he settled was a favorite hunting ground of the Mohawks due to the abundance of deer, elk, bear and other game. Indians frequently called at Lindsay's cabin and he always gave them consideration and kindness, treatment which would soon bring its reward.

The winter of 1739-1740 was unusually severe. The snow lay deep on the ground, blocking the forest trails and cutting off all communication with the settlements along the Mohawk River. Lindsay, unused to the severity of winters in the wilderness, had failed to make ample provision for himself and his family and was soon faced with starvation.

At this critical time an Indian, who had traveled from his home on the Mohawk on-snowshoes, arrived at the cabin. He found the family in desperate circumstances and immediately returned to his camp where he secured provisions and then again made his way through the forest to the snow-bound cabin.

All through the harrowing winter this Mohawk brave made periodic trips to the Lindsay home, taking to it food which enabled the white settlers to survive until spring. One wonders whether this kind-hearted Indian was alive when his fellow tribesmen burned the village of Cherry Valley and massacred its inhabitants 40 years later.

This 1740 episode did not cause Lindsay to abandon his acres and return to a safer, more comfortable home in New England. Instead he sang the praises of the locality and persuaded Rev. Samuel Dunlop, an Irishman whom he had known in New York City to visit him. In order to persuade the clergyman to remain, he offered him a tract of several hundred acres.

Dunlop accepted the offer and in 1741 persuaded several Scots-Irish families to emigrate from Londonderry, New Hampshire, to Lindsay's patent. Among the men were David Ramsey, William Galt, William Dickson and James Campbell. These men laid the foundations of the Cherry Valley settlement which was to play so conspicuous a part in the later development of the upper Susquehanna region.

The colony grew slowly but by 1769 there were 40 or 50 families, mostly of Scots-Irish origin, living there, while as many more, for the most part Palatinate Germans from the Schoharie and Mohawk valleys, lived in nearby communities.

The settlement was entirely wiped out by the massacre of 1778 and it was not until five years later that white men came again into the region and built anew upon the ruins.

## THE PIONEER GIFFORDS

Heavy forest covered the land when Elihu Gifford settled in the Oneonta Creek valley 163 years ago. By infinite labor he cleared the ground, acre by acre, built a log house and necessary farm buildings and burned the excess timber. Several generations of his descendants worked the rich soil and then progress caught up with the Giffords.

The growing village of Oneonta at the foot of the valley needed water and a storage reservoir was built a quarter of a mile above the farm. The Gifford lands were purchased, the buildings cleared away and the area seeded with pine. Today the spot is as heavily wooded as it was when Elihu Gifford first saw it and the only evidence of his industry is an abandoned cemetery hidden in the woods about a thousand feet from the road which crosses the East Street valley below the upper reservoir. Here in utter solitude and seclusion lie Elihu Gifford and his family.

Eight maples, entirely surrounded by dense pine forest, inclose the graves. Around the trees had once been two strands of iron chain, now either broken or engulfed by the tree trunks. One sandstone marker bears the legend: "Elihu Gifford, died July 6, 1839, aged 67." Near it is another: "Sabra, wife of Elihu Gifford, died Feb. 18, 1848, age 74 years." Some of the graves are marked by pieces of fieldstone bearing no visible inscriptions.

The Elihu Giffords had nine children, of whom Caleb, Henry, Obadiah and John are buried in this cemetery. Aaron, Daniel, Elihu, Jr. and Deborah lie in Riverside Cemetery in Oneonta while Sarah is buried at West Davenport. Apparently the last burial in the Gifford cemetery was Henry in 1886. The next year George I. Wilber bought the farm for watershed purposes.

Elihu Gifford, born in Connecticut in 1772, was one of the thousands of New Englanders who came into New York State following the Revolution. He settled first near Catskill, then moved to Albany and thence to West Oneonta. In 1806 he settled in the Oneonta Creek valley near what is now upper East Street. He built a log cabin at the junction of the cross road below the upper reservoir and proceeded to clear the land.

At about this time Josiah Peet and Ephraim Farrington moved into the neighborhood and a short time later Colonel William Richardson settled further up the creek where the reservoir is now. Soon a thriving little community formed around these settlements.

Near the Gifford home a school was built and a sawmill, known for years as the "Blue Mill" was constructed. In the Richardson clearing were erected another school, a church and saw and gristmills. The building of the upper reservoir in 1887 wiped out "Richardson's Mills" and the Gifford settlement and the planting of pine trees restored the section to its pristine state.

The Gifford name, once borne by many in this vicinity, is disappearing. Raymond Gifford of 95 Spruce Street and Lyle Gifford of Gifford Hill are, to the best of our knowledge, the only male descendants of the pioneer Elihu living hereabouts.

That seems to be the destiny of pioneer families. Male descendants move away and once common names remain only in memory.

## AGRICULTURAL OTSEGO

There was a time when Otsego County had five representatives in the New York State Assembly. Now, in a sense, it has none, for Donald Mitchell, who ably safeguards our interests at Albany, is a resident of Herkimer county, not of Otsego.

Otsego was allotted one assemblyman when it was formed in 1791 but the county grew so rapidly that it had five representatives by 1795. For the next 40 years it never had less than three Otsegoans in the Assembly from 1836 to 1857 and then two until 1893. One assemblyman represented the county from 1893 until 1966 when reapportionment threw Otsego into the same district with Delaware and Ed Mason of Hobart was elected to serve both counties, the first non-resident to be Otsego's assemblyman in 175 years. Another reapportionment last year aligned Otsego with Herkimer.

Otsego's 1,013 square miles, or 648,320 acres, make it the 17th in area among the 62 counties of the state. In population, however, it now ranks 39th. In 1810 it was 10th in the state in population, topping each of the counties which now contain the largest upstate cities - Utica, Albany, Syracuse, Troy, Rochester, Buffalo and Schenectady.

Oneida county was ahead of Otsego in population in 1820, Albany and Onondaga in 1830 and Rensselaer, Monroe and Erie in 1840 but it was not until 1910 that Schenectady surpassed Otsego's figure.

Otsego has had distinctions, especially in the field of agriculture, out of all proportion to its size and population. New York State led the nation in beef production until the 1850s and Otsego produced its share of cattle, which were driven over the turnpikes to Philadelphia, Albany and New York City. In 1840 Otsego was New York's top county in sheep and wool with over a quarter of a million sheep roaming its hills and valleys. At that time the county ranked high in the production of hemp and flax, potatoes, apples, honey and beeswax.

Dairying has always been a leading industry in Otsego. Until New York City absorbed most of the fluid milk, cheese and butter were important commodities. In 1864 alone, 1,650 pounds of cheese were made in the county and over three million pounds of butter.

It may be surprising to learn that Otsego once led the state in the marketing of maple syrup, producing a half million pounds in 1865. The raising of hops was a prime industry in the county for many years. Otsego was not only the top county in the state in the quantity of hops grown but it was internationally known for the quality of its product.

At the 1846 meeting of the American Agricultural Society it was reported that "The climate of New York is peculiarly favorable to their perfection, and the hops of this state are acknowledged by brewers of all countries to be very superior and they command 20 per cent more in the market than any other hops. The county of Otsego is celebrated for the excellence of its hops. They are probably the best that are grown."

Otsego remained in first place until 1875, the yield thereafter gradually dwindling, although in our youth hop raising was still quite an industry and there were three brokers in Oneonta whose sole business was the buying and selling of hops.

## A NAME CLEARED

All that glitters is not gold and Nathan Smith was not at all certain what he had unearthed as he was cultivating corn on John Rockwell's farm near Garrattsville one sunny afternoon in 1903. When he had brushed the dirt from the shiny yellow object, he found that he was holding an English guinea coined in 1769 during the reign of George II. Another cut of the hoe and a silver half crown bearing the likeness of James II and the date 1685, came to light.

Smith was not aware of it at the time but he had solved a mystery of 125 years standing and had cleared the name of a daughter of John Johnson, one of the early settlers in the region.

John Johnson migrated from Derbyshire, England, about 1774 and settled in Burlington township, Otsego county. He had two daughters, one of whom married Robert Garratt, after whom the hamlet of Garrattsville was named. The unmarried daughter lived with her parents. Johnson was not a wealthy man but he was considered to be comfortably well off.

The Indians began to raid the white settlements in 1777 and then came the bloody massacre at Cherry Valley during the next year. The Johnson and Garratt families, who lived on adjoining farms, prepared to flee the area. Johnson buried his hoard of gold and silver coins in a field but before he, Garratt, and their kinfolk could reach safety they were all captured by the Indians and taken to Canada where they were kept captive for five years.

When the two families returned to their former homesteads in 1783, Johnson began to seek his buried treasure, whose exact location he could not recall. An extensive search proved fruitless. The unmarried daughter was the only person with Johnson when he buried the coins and he accused her of finding and taking the money.

The girl denied the charge but her father could not be persuaded that she was innocent and refused even to talk with her thereafter. She lived in the family home for a few years and then married and moved away. Johnson died not long after that, still believing that his daughter was a thief. As the years rolled by, no trace was found of the missing treasure and a division of opinion as to the girl's guilt developed among the descendants.

A century and a quarter later the mystery was solved when Nathan Smith found the cache of coins. The daughter had been proven innocent. Smith reported the find to his employer and they started to dig for the remainder of the treasure, agreeing that the proceeds of their search would be divided equally between them.

The men marked off a 12 foot square plot of ground and dug it to a depth of six inches, uncovering 33 gold and 37 silver coins, a few coppers and a silver and agate sleeve button. The gold coins ranged in date from 1730 to 1769, most of them having been minted during the reigns of George II and George III. The silver pieces, with the exception of one Spanish piece of eight, were dated from 1685 to 1698 and were issued during the reigns of James II and William III. The copper coins were English half pennies dated 1718 and 1724.

Where are these coins now? Willard V. Huntington purchased a number of them and they may very well now be in the American section of the Huntington Library at San Marino, California. Some others were given or sold to Johnson descendants. A rose guinea dated 1764 and bearing the likeness of George II, and the Spanish piece of eight are in the possession of Mrs. Nathan Pendleton of Oneonta.

## A QUIET MAY

Things were pretty quiet in Oneonta during May a half century ago. The term "urban renewal" meant nothing in 1916 and a suggestion that the city would someday need an airport would have been laughed at.

There was no Route 7 to relocate; the schools, most of them quite new, were giving no concern and the reservoirs supplied all the water that was needed so there was no pipeline to the river to give trouble. There was no thought that the State Normal School would ever outgrow the big building on the hill and Hartwick College was some years in the future.

Vast armies were fighting in Europe to be sure, but America was not as yet greatly affected although there were some dark clouds on the horizon. The President had unlimbered his typewriter, which Will Rogers called the "Wilson machine gun" and was firing notes to the Kaiser protesting unrestricted submarine warfare.

A troupe of German musicians passing through town had created a spy scare and the Armory was being guarded, according to Captain Edward Parish of Company G. A tag day for Belgian relief gave some indication that there was trouble abroad in the world.

It was beginning to look as though the stock which many Oneontans held in the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company (now IBM) might eventually be worth something. The company's quarterly statement revealed earnings of about \$269,000. In 60 years the quarterly earnings would be in excess of 100 millions.

June and Commencement were nearing and the final events were being held in the schools. The annual Prize Speaking Contest at OHS had taken place with Nathan Pendleton winning first place in the declamation section with Crosby Seybolt the runner-up. In the recitation class Gertrude McDaris was the winner followed by Catherine Shaffer. Other contestants were Earl Clapp, Josephine Lauren, Bruce LeSeur, Evelyn Grosfant, William Fay and Frances Wheaton.

In the 8th grade speaking contest at the Normal School the winners were Helen Shearer and Dolphus Luce while Dorothy Rowe and Marshall Aldrich were given honorable mention.

George W. Fairchild had just announced that he would be a candidate for re-election to the Congress from the 34th District, comprising the counties of Otsego, Delaware, Chenango and Broome. He would be opposed in the Republican primary by State Senator Samuel A. Jones of Norwich. In due time Fairchild would win both the primary and the election contests.

It was the opening of the baseball season and 30 Oneonta fans traveled to Binghamton in the automobiles of U.A. Ferguson, Frank H. Monroe, Dr. David H. Mills, I. Jay Bookhout, A. Stanley Morris, O.A. Hubbell and A. Spencer Wright. The Wright car, which contained an auto mechanic, Harry Curtis, trailed the others so that help would be at hand if trouble developed. No difficulties were encountered although chains had to be put on to get the cars through the clay road over Belden Hill.

All was peace and quiet in the Oneonta of the spring of 1916. Trouble lay ahead but no one suspected its nature.

## NO LONGER THE MONARCH

The young man paused in his work atop the steel skeleton which would become a State College dormitory and gazed out over the city of Oneonta and the broad reaches of the Susquehanna Valley. In imagination he could see the landscape, with huge trees marching branch to branch from horizon to horizon, as it was when his ancestors held dominion over it.

For this high-steel worker was a Mohawk Indian, one of the breed which the contractor finds indispensable when he reaches for the sky with his tall buildings. During the past few years many Indians living on the St. Regis reservation in northern New York and southern Canada, have worked on the Senior High School and on structures on the Hartwick and State College campuses.

Two hundred years ago the Iroquois League held undisputed sway over a vast territory stretching from Maine to the Carolinas and from the Atlantic to the Mississippi. The enforcers of the decrees of the councils of the Confederation, which was the first experiment in self government in North America, were the Mohawks, who were among the fiercest fighters the world has ever known.

What has happened to the Senecas, Onondagas and Oneidas, the Tuscaroras, Cayugas and Mohawks who once comprised the Six Nations? How have the descendants of the men who once owned and governed all of Central New York fared at the hands of the white man?

Generally speaking, the treatment of the redskin has been a national disgrace. He has been robbed and cheated and his treaty rights disregarded whenever it was to the advantage of the white men to do so. The exception has been in New York where for the most part the Federal government has kept hands off and where the state has been doing a pretty good job for 150 years although an ugly situation did develop in the western part of the state.

The Iroquois Confederation broke up at the end of the Revolution. All of the tribes except the Oneidas had remained loyal to the British and asylum was offered to such as desired it around the city of Brantford in southern Ontario, Canada. Many Indians fled to this haven but others remained in New York and were placed on reservations on lands which had originally been theirs.

The Oneida nation no longer exists as a group. As a reward for loyalty to the Colonial cause, the Oneida reservation was given to its occupants in 1843. The Onondagas, "keepers of the central council fire" at the headquarters of the Confederation near the present Syracuse, were settled on a reservation comprising about one fourth of the land owned by the tribe at the end of the Revolution. Some of the Tuscaroras returned to their former homes in the Carolinas while others were placed on a reservation in the western part of the state.

Many Cayugas moved to Ohio and later to Oklahoma while some stayed with Senecas on the Cattaraugus reservation. The Senecas have three reservations embracing about 53,000 acres. The city of Salamanca is within one of these reservations and is occupied under a 99 year lease, with provisions for renewal, which expires in 1991.

Some Mohawks are at Caughnawaga, near Montreal, but most are on the St. Regis reservation of some 38,000 acres, about a third of which is in upper New York State and the remainder in southern Canada. Here reside the men who have worked on most of the high buildings in the eastern United States.

## AN INGENIOUS SCHEME

It was a fantastic scheme that Judge William Cooper proposed back in 1793 but it was not without its practical aspects. In short, he suggested that the world's desire and need for sweets could be satisfied by tapping the resource of America's millions of sugar maple trees.

"We are encouraged to transmit to you", Cooper wrote to capitalists in Philadelphia, "the statement we have been able to make from actual observation, of the quantity of sugar which has been made this season in the former township of Otsego, and which was an entire wilderness in 1786. We find, upon a moderate calculation, that there has been made at least 160,000 pounds weight, which at nine pence per pound is equal in value to 15,000 dollars."

Tench Coxe, one of the monied men in the City of Brotherly Love to whom Judge Cooper wrote, was much in favor of the scheme. It was his thought that each farmer with 100 acres of sugar maple land could provide 1,000 pounds of sugar a year, using only common farming and cooking utensils. If 26,000 small families did this, it would result in the production of 26 million pounds of sugar annually, or a quantity equal to all the sugar and molasses consumed in the United States each year.

The scheme of the founder of Cooperstown was not the first attempt to produce maple sugar in large quantities. In 1791 the Holland Land Company purchased 140,000 acres of land in the north-central part of the state and sent a man named Gerrit Boon to start a large scale sugar industry. He set to work on a site where the slope was such that he could use gravity to carry the sap to a large vat. His troughs and pipes were made of thin wood and were soon cracked by sun and frost. He might have made a partial success of the venture had he used conventional methods but this he refused to do and the experiment failed. The village of Boonville marks the site of this first attempt to make maple sugar on a large scale.

The attempt to make maple sugar in quantity had an humanitarian aspect. Benjamin Rush, noted Philadelphian, thought that not only could enough be produced to satisfy the domestic market but that sufficient might be exported to destroy the cane sugar plantations in the West Indies and "to render", he said, "the commerce and slavery of our African brethren in the sugar islands as unnecessary as it has always been inhuman and unjust."

However, factors were at work which forever destroyed the dream. While the maple sugar experiments were going on, cane sugar was produced for the first time in Louisiana and the sugar beet was being introduced into the country. Furthermore, the farmers, in their voracious desire for tillable land, were annually destroying thousands of sugar maples.

Maple syrup and maple sugar are still produced in Otsego and adjacent counties but the products in their pure state are virtually unknown to the average person. One hundred per cent maple syrup can still be bought but it is expensive and most people use on their pancakes and waffles an adulterated variety containing not more than 20 per cent of pure maple syrup. It doesn't satisfy us, who was brought up on the pure stuff, but most people today don't know the difference.

## A TREATISE ON EATING

"Boneless Barbecued Spareribs, Country Style" was the startling entry we once observed on the menu of a local restaurant. It was not noted what the "country" was, whether Tibet, Timbuktu or Tasmania; it certainly wasn't the "country" of Otsego or Delaware counties. We ordered the item found it to be a pork loin, tasty enough but not resembling a sparerib nearly as much as a glass of water with an olive in it resembles a martini.

That got us to thinking about food and the differences between the kind served today and the luscious fare of yesteryear. Right here we must say that we are no part of a cook. We can pour a nice glass of orange juice and have been known to conduct a slice of bread in and out of a toaster but that is about the extent of our culinary skill. However, we acquired the habit of eating early in life, found it good and have clung to it for many years. And, after all, the proof of the pudding is in the eating.

We were brought up on New York State farm cooking and, although it is all a matter of taste, we still prefer it to any other variety, foreign or domestic. In the old days you knew what you were ordering, for a roast was a roast and a chop a chop. You didn't order some exotic sounding item from a menu only to find that the orchestra was playing it.

A half century and more ago just about everything on the farmer's table came from his acres. The beef and the veal, the pork and the lamb, the chicken, turkey, duck and goose, all came from animals raised and butchered on the farm. The bacon and the ham were home cured. The vegetables, the berries and the fruit were all home grown. The butter and the cheese were of the farmer's manufacture and the jellies, jams and preserves were made in his kitchen.

There are two fields of cooking in which we feel that the past must yield to the present - coffee and steak. Present day coffee we feel to be much superior to the boiled coffee of yore. The old time farmer had no genius for steak. When he slaughtered, the tenderloin and sirloin were pretty apt to become part of the rib roasts and the round to be used for corning. This meant better roasts and corned beef. When steak was served it was generally cut thin and was fried instead of broiled.

Farm breakfasts were really something. The family rose before dawn and a couple of hours work had been done before the first meal of the day. What passes for breakfast today wouldn't have given the farmer enough energy to get from the house to the barn. He wanted plenty of oatmeal and then a meat course, say salt pork and cream gravy with baked potatoes or perhaps ham with home fried potatoes.

Pancakes were almost always a part of the meal. Pancake batter was always on tap, so to speak, during the cold months. What went on the cakes was not the insipid stuff that passes for maple syrup these days but the 100 per cent pure article. Or take a stack of buckwheats covered with what used to be called butter but is now known as the high priced spread, and shaved maple sugar,, and you had a dish fit for the gods.

Here we are at the end of the story and with the tale only half told. Perhaps we'll continue it if we don't get too many calls telling us that when it comes to food we don't know what we are talking about. Maybe we don't, but then maybe we do.

## MORE ABOUT FOOD

No one took us too severely to task about our story on old time foods and cooking so we will try again, mindful of the dangers inherent in discussing a subject which is not primarily a man's province.

In our description of a farm breakfast we failed to mention a very popular item - fried mush drenched in maple syrup. Mush, whose principal ingredient was corn meal, and milk was a favorite supper dish. What was left over was put in a greased bread tin. In the morning the mush, which had solidified, was sliced and fried in deep fat. It was a most satisfying dish.

The big meal, always called dinner by country, village and small city people was in the middle of the day. This was a hearty repast, for the men folk were ravenous after hours of hard labor.

The meat course was the important one and the fare in that category was varied. It might be beef, lamb or pork, veal or ham. Or it could be chicken, turkey, duck or goose, especially if it were Sunday. The ham and bacon were home cured and smoked in the ubiquitous smokehouse. And then there were such delicacies as sweetbreads and lamb frys, pickled pigs' feet and headcheese, as well as pure pork sausage.

Potatoes were a staple and they came boiled, baked and roasted, mashed, riced, scalloped and fried. The excess of boiled potatoes ended up as the creamed variety while what was left of the mashed ones became fried potato cakes. We do not recall that there were french fries in those days.

There was a surfeit of fresh vegetables in season - peas, corn and beets; the various kinds of beans and squash; turnips and cabbage and lettuce - in fact about every kind of vegetable that will grow in a temperate climate. We remember with affection the parsnip, which, after a winter in the ground, was delicious when creamed, fried or in a stew. When the Mason jar came into use, many of the vegetables were "put up" for winter consumption. The Jolly Green Giant had not yet put in an appearance so they were not frozen in butter sauce.

Most of the seasoning used in cooking all these good things was a home product since every farmer's wife had an herb garden where she grew sage, savory, bay, marjoram and thyme as well as chives, shallots, mint and parsley.

Fresh fruit from the orchards back of the house was always on the table in season - apples, pears, plums and peaches. Berries of every sort, usually picked by the women, were in evidence - red and black raspberries, blackberries and blacktops, huckleberries, currants and gooseberries, not to mention wild strawberries and cranberries from the small bog down by the creek. The woods held nuts of many kinds, including American chestnuts, which many people of today have never seen, walnuts and hickory nuts, butternuts and beechnuts.

Jams, jellies, pickles and preserves were a part of every meal. There was white bread and rye and graham, rolls and biscuits and muffins, all freshly baked. The desserts were many and varied and included pies of every sort, loaf cakes and layer cakes, cookies and tarts, puddings and custards and rich, yellow ice cream made with cream and eggs.

Folks, you will have to go to bed hungry for we haven't space to tell about the baked beans and steamed brown bread, the johnny cake and all the other things that were served at the evening meal.

## FORESTS HELPED AND HURT

The pioneers who carried westward the plows which broke the prairie, experienced dangers and difficulties but they found the land ready for cultivation. Not so the original settlers of the country east of the Alleghenies. Before they could build a rude home and plant the grains and vegetables which were needed to sustain life, they had to clear away a portion of the dense forests which covered nearly all of the area and while doing so had to fend off the attacks of Indians and wild animals.

There were plenty of waterways into the interior but it was fear of the wilderness that kept the colonists locked in the coastal areas for 200 years. The forests were thus a deterrent to the spread of agriculture but, paradoxically, it was the existence of the forests that made farming possible once clearings had been made.

Out of the prolific wilderness the dwellers in New York State practically sustained themselves for two centuries. From the forests came lumber for houses and barns; logs for fuel and material for fencing; bark for tanning, charcoal and ashes for fertilizers and potash; sugar and vinegar, furs and game for meat. In later times the forests supplied railroad ties and telephone poles; pulp for paper and fuel for boats and trains as well as for power purposes.

And, again paradoxically, it was the forest cover which directed the flow of water into the large number of rivers and streams and made possible the great abundance of water power. This operated the sawmills which turned the trees into useful beams and boards. Thus the forests were a potent factor in their own destruction.

The forests teemed with game birds and animals of every description, which furnished the only meat the settler had until he could breed domesticated animals. But for game and fish, the pioneer would have starved, ere he could harvest his first crop of corn or wheat.

An unexpected run of shad up the Susquehanna once saved the fledgling village of Cooperstown from starvation and the intermittent visitations of flocks of passenger pigeons helped fill the larder of many a colonist. The birds came in the early spring when stocks of food were exhausted and were like manna to the Israelites.

In the "pigeon years" the birds came by the literal millions in search of food in the forests - acorns and beechnuts, buds and tender leaves. At times the pigeons were so numerous that they would blot out the sun and render the heavens dark. It is a sad fact that out of the billions of passenger pigeons which once existed, there is today not a single specimen extant, in or out of captivity, in the whole world. Thus has man rewarded his benefactor.

The forests helped man but they also hurt him. They not only sheltered the Indians and wild beasts which were a constant menace but they also harbored flies, gnats and mosquitoes, which caused a greater toll of death than the redskin or the panther. "Genesee fever", "chills and fever", "ague" and "the shakes" were all folk names for the malaria which laid countless people low until the forests were cleared and the swamps drained. To avoid this malady was one of the principal reasons why the pioneers settled on the hills and ridges rather than in the more fertile river and creek bottoms.

## TROUBLES APLENTY

When the sole witness to a head-on collision between two locomotives was asked at the inquiry what was in his mind when the trains came together, he replied: "I thought it was a hell of a way to run a railroad."

Possibly the same thought was in the minds of those who saw the two trolley cars smash into each other near Mt. Vision on the foggy morning of February 27, 1902. Conductor R. Leonard was fatally injured and Motorman Fred Sheldon was crippled for life.

The Oneonta, Cooperstown & Richfield Springs Railroad had a pretty crude signal system in its early days. There were no written train orders and no telephones. The north or south bound car which came to a passing track first would halt while the crew contemplated the car lights. If they were dim, it indicated that there was another car nearby and the trolley would go into the siding. If the lights were bright, the car would proceed on its way.

Under such a system disaster was inevitable and it struck on February 27 as we have related. Safer controls would later be imposed but in 1902 the young OC & RS was in a state of confusion. The line had reached Hartwick and was being pushed toward Richfield with trouble being encountered every mile of the way.

Nineteen hundred and two was a particularly bad year for the road. There was a heavy snowfall on February 6, bringing plenty of problems. A north bound car with 26 passengers was stalled at Chase Summit and the passengers had to seek the hospitality of a nearby farmhouse for the night. Further down the line a car became stuck in the snow at the foot of Bull Hill and Herbert Jennings, the promotor of the line, who happened to be on the car, sent for horses and a sled and had the passengers transferred to Oneonta.

Bull Hill is the eminence which is now the upper level of the Country Club. In its early days the electric road went down Chestnut to Oneida, thence to what is now Country Club Road and then down the hill and across the Otego Creek flats to West Oneonta.

On February 26 one of the old four wheelers which had been used on the streets of Oneonta and then converted into a freight car, tipped over and Superintendent Burns of the line and the motorman barely escaped with their lives. On the next day occurred the fatal accident described above.

The bad luck continued and on April 1 a steam locomotive used in construction work rammed a trolley southbound from Cooperstown and in charge of Conductor M.B. Champlin and Motorman Barton Elliott. Almost miraculously, no one was badly hurt.

On July 29 two freight cars were derailed at the foot of Bull Hill and four days later a D. & H. locomotive which had been leased for construction purposes collided with an electric car near the Hartwick power house. This was the third such accident and probably set a world record for collisions between steam and electric cars. On October 28 a trolley left the track at the foot of Bull Hill and went down a ten foot embankment with its 17 passengers. Again no one was badly hurt.

It was almost as dangerous to ride a trolley in 1902 as it is to traverse the highways in a motor car in 1969.

## BECKER'S CANAL

They told Fred Becker that it couldn't be done; that any attempt to drain his wet acres off lower Chestnut Street would simply cause trouble for other land owners in the vicinity.

Undeterred by the lack of faith of his neighbors, the ingenious D.&H. engineer went ahead with his venture and as a result his land north of Chestnut Street and embracing the area now covered by the Greater Plains School, as well as the territory from Jefferson Avenue west and north to the Winney Hill Road, is now relatively free of surface water. They call the stream that now receives the flow, Willow Brook but it would seem that Becker's Canal would be a more fitting title.

Becker came to Oneonta in 1920 and purchased a tract of land north of Butler Street from Jerome Spencer. The upper end of this tract, which had once been part of the Charles Murdock farm, bordered on the Winney Hill Road. The narrow valley was drained by a small brook which, for some reason, virtually ended at the upper end of Becker's land with the result that its waters spilled over the ground between there and Chestnut Street. In time of rain the land and the streets running through it were inches deep in water.

The enterprising land owner, who wanted to convert his acres into a residential development, solved the difficulty by digging a water course down through his land almost to Butler Street, where, making a right angle turn, the ditch proceeds parallel to Richards Avenue. This is the creek which you see to the left as you face the Greater Plains School.

Four bridges were necessary and Becker built them himself of field stone, using an arch design. The right angle turn necessitated an embankment to deflect the stream and this he built of reinforced concrete with the aid of Bennie Pratt. When the residents in the Richards Avenue section saw that the plan was a success they continued the ditch on to the Winney Hill Road. The stream finds its way eventually into the Otego Creek.

Mr. Becker built himself a residence, largely of field stone and with most of the work done by himself, on Jefferson Avenue just across his canal from where the school is now. This home, where he lives in retirement after 48 years of railroad service, is one of the most beautiful and unusual dwellings we have ever been in.

The development of the West End since we were a boy has been truly amazing. When we used to haunt the Table Rocks 60 some years ago the view from that eminence toward Oneida Street disclosed little but farm land. There was a small but ancient settlement stretching from the corner of Oneida Street to a little beyond Country Club Road but from the corner up Chestnut Street to Kearney there were only a few farmhouses and barns.

The Ceperley and Morgan Real Estate Company started the West End boom in 1915 when it purchased considerable land, put through streets and sold building lots. The area has been growing ever since until today it has its own bank, school, churches and stores and is increasing in size month by month. The Grand Canal of Fred Becker can be credited with at least part of that growth since it opened for development virtually unusable land.

## IN THE NICK OF TIME

When the news reached City Hall that the rapidly rising waters of the Susquehanna were endangering lives in the Webb Island section of Neahwa Park, the police and fire departments went into action rapidly.

Firemen Joe Scanlon, James Gardner and Bob Reeser and Patrolmen Revera Still and Bert Face were soon on the scene of the impending disaster and, aided by a score of park employees and WPA workers, they effected eight rescues but only after a considerable period of strenuous labor. Strangely enough, however, there was not a single expression of gratitude from those whose lives had been saved. One of those rescued even kicked his benefactor in the face.

But that's the way of animals and one could hardly expect anything else from the two bears, the buffalo and the five deer who were lassoed and dragged to higher ground on that March day in 1936 when the river went six feet over flood stage and inundated vast sections of the city and surrounding countryside.

Through the years the creeks which course through Oneonta have probably caused more cumulative damage than has the Susquehanna and upon several occasions old man river has gone on a rampage and caused a great deal of damage to the low-lying sections of the community. The flood of March, 1936, was one of the bad ones.

The winter had been severe and the ice was thick on Otsego and Goodyear Lakes and the snow lay deep on the hills. Then a sharp rise in temperature and a 15 hour rain sent every stream in the vicinity over its banks. By 1 A.M. on the 18th nearly four feet of water was going over the Colliers Dam and the river was steadily rising.

The water kept creeping up the guage at the Main Street bridge and when the crest was reached at about 6 P.M. the reading was 19.92 feet which was within eight one-hundredths of a foot of the all time record of 20 feet set in 1913.

The buildings at the sewage disposal plant were flooded to a depth of several feet and a gang of six water department employees worked all night in an effort to save as much property as possible. Virtually all of Neahwa Park was inundated with the exception of the ball park, to which the rescued animals had been taken.

Four feet of water covered lower Main Street and the laundry, the Epps garage (now Drogen's) and Dreamland Gardens suffered considerable damage as their cellars filled with water. The Main Street bridge was ordered closed and traffic re-routed. The people living on Neahwa Place were evacuated and residents of London Avenue prepared to move although the water never reached their houses nor those on River Street.

The surging waters covered acres of meadowland between Oneonta and Sidney and highways were inundated for yards at a stretch, rendering them impassable. In some places the water came nearly to the level of the railroad tracks.

Silver and Oneonta creeks, which had created havoc in the preceding July, were high but did not go over their banks within the city limits.

## GLORIOUS AGE OF STEAM

"The Moving Finger writes; and having writ moves on: nor all your Piety nor Wit shall lure it back to cancel half a Line, Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it."

Time's finger has written in burnished letters Oneonta's fame as a railroad town but it has moved on, never to return. The Delaware and Hudson is still a vital part of the city's economy, with a considerable payroll, and a substantial amount of money comes in each month by way of retirement benefits. However, the day has passed when railroading was our biggest industry and when its influence was felt in every facet of our lives.

One cogent reason for the formation of the Delaware-Otsego Railroad was to re-create and preserve just a bit of the color and flavor of the days of steam. At best, however, it can only suggest, not revive, that lost era.

Let's go back some 60 years and see what the situation was in relation to the railroads. All three - the D.&H., the U.&D. and the trolley road -were going full blast. The latter two roads employed comparatively few local men but the D.&H. had nearly 2,000 Oneontans on its payroll. Today it employs fewer people here than does State College.

Locomotives were repaired and even a few were built here. Freight cars and gondolas were constructed and serviced in the local shops. Passenger cars were built and repaired by Oneonta men.

This work was done by craftsmen of many different trades and occupations. There were blacksmiths and boilermakers, machinists and valve setters. In the car shops were carpenters and cabinet makers, painters and upholsterers; plumbers and electricians. There were even florists who grew the flowers which graced the environs of the passenger stations and were given as bouquets to the lady passengers.

Over a hundred train crews of five men each once worked out of Oneonta as well as gangs of bridge builders, section hands and signal maintenance men. In addition there were the yard crews, the dispatchers and scores of clerical employees.

Today when only infrequent buses provide public transportation in and out of Oneonta, it is pretty hard to believe that 60 years ago there were 72 passenger trains in and out of the community each working day but that is the actual count. The U.&D. ran six passenger trains a day each way and the D.&H. the same number in addition to several on the Cooperstown branch.

The trolley road, which had several names during its existence but ended up with the title of Southern New York, ran from Oneonta to Mohawk. There was an outgoing car each hour of the day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. and incoming ones from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. In addition there were hourly trains from Cooperstown and return.

The railroad dollar built Oneonta. It financed the churches and the schools, the homes and the streets and sidewalks. It kept the cash registers of the merchants ringing.

Consider these things as you visit the DO Line. You won't be back in the age of steam but you will see and hear much that is reminiscent of those golden years of Oneonta's history.

## A DIFFERENT KIND OF BEE

"Bees" were an important part of the economic and social life of the early settlers in this region. However, we are not talking about the kind that convert nectar into ambrosia; that variety would come into the picture only after the woodlands had been converted into fields of fragrant clover.

The bees we mean are the logging bees and the husking bees, the barn raising bees and the spinning and quilting bees - those neighborhood affairs which combined aid to the individual with high festivity.

The life of the first settlers in these valleys and on the surrounding hills was a hard one. Leaving comfortable homes in the Mohawk Valley or in New England they came over frightful roads into a land which was covered from horizon to horizon with dense forests. With an axe as their only tool, they first had to build a log cabin and then to clear the land for the planting of crops.

Other pioneers in the area had the same problems and they often banded together and held logging bees on each other's land. They would cut down as many trees as they could in a day, strip them of their branches and after cutting the logs into 10 or 15 foot lengths, would pile them for burning when they were sufficiently dry.

In due time another bee would be held to burn the timber. The ashes were saved and leached into lye for use in making soap. This waste of good timber was necessary in the days before there were conveniently located sawmills and prior to the start of the rafting industry. The settler had more timber than he could use and no place to store it so the only thing he could do was to burn the logs.

Later, when sawmills sprang into being in about every hamlet the farmer built a larger house and barns, using sawed boards. This was the occasion for raising bees when the neighbors gathered to construct the frames of the structure being built and to raise them into place. It might be added that these occasions were not exactly temperance rallies. At most raising bees a jug was passed from hand to hand with considerable frequency.

Several other kinds of bees were commonplace when the farming became more advanced. Indian corn was raised on every farm and after it had been harvested there would be a husking bee attended by all members of the families. Should a boy or girl find a red ear, he or she was privileged to choose an escort for the dance that might follow or for the homeward journey. Doubtless many a red ear was smuggled in which had done service on more than one such festive occasion.

Apple paring bees were held after orchards had been planted and the trees had grown to fruit bearing size. Young people of both sexes would gather to pare, quarter, core and string perhaps 10 or 15 bushels of Baldwins, Red Astrachans or Pound Sweets. After the job was done there would be dancing, games and hearty refreshments.

For the spinning bees wool, flax or tow, carded and ready for spinning, would be distributed to the neighbors who would be instructed to spin so many knots to the pound so that the yarn or thread would be of the required fineness. On a specified evening the finished product would be brought to a designated place and an evening of fun would ensue. Quilting bees were conducted in a similar manner.

Thus did the pioneers help each other and in the process secure the fun and relaxation not often found in their work filled lives. There was no surfeit of pleasure in those bygone days.

## WORST U.&D. WRECK

There were six men inside the caboose and three riding the back platform as the Ulster & Delaware work train backed rapidly down the single track between Roxbury and Grand Gorge on a May morning in 1922. The engineer, A.J. Pelham of Kingston, was making time as he was due in a few minutes at Grand Gorge where he would put the train on a siding so that an extra freight from Oneonta could pass.

There had been a mixup in the train orders, however, and as the caboose swung around a slight curve, the horrified men on the car platform saw the engine of the freight bearing down upon them. They had barely time to jump to the ground and scramble up the bank beside the track before the air was filled with debris as the trains came together.

The six men in the caboose never had a chance. They were killed instantly and their bodies were badly mangled as the light car was literally pulverized between the big locomotive and the heavy crane on the car next to the caboose. From the standpoint of lives lost it was the worst accident in the history of the U.&D. now the Catskill Mountain division of the Penn-Central.

The three men who jumped for their lives, sustaining only minor injuries, were Conductor Guy B. Mattice of 3 Hickory Street, Oneonta, and Alonzo Hoit and Jacob Steinhelber of Grand Gorge. Those who met death in the "little red house" were William Lafferty of Oneonta, track supervisor for the railroad; Ora Worth of Hobart; Fred Chase, Fred Borst and Fred Louden of Grand Gorge; and Abraham Johnson of Oneonta.

The crew of the work train, which was composed of a locomotive, two flat cars, the big crane and the caboose, had been engaged all the morning in cleaning out sluices, picking up waste metal and unloading new rails. The collision smashed the caboose to kindling and threw the crane and the flat cars down an embankment on one side of the track. The engine remained on the rails.

The extra freight was made up of gondolas loaded with coal and was bound from Oneonta to Arkville. It was in charge of Conductor Joseph Redmond of 50 Liberty Street, Oneonta, and Engineer C. Neebe of Kingston. The locomotive went off the rails and into the bank on the up side of the track while several cars pitched down the slope on the other side. No one on this train suffered more than minor injuries.

Wrecking crews were sent to the scene at once but it was many hours before the extensive wreckage was cleared from the track and it was made safe for train passage. In the meantime passengers and mail were transferred around the wreck and milk from the north side of the blocked area was taken to Oneonta and thence to Albany and New York via the Delaware & Hudson and the Central.

The journals of the period did not place responsibility for the catastrophe but it appeared that the work train orders required that the train be on the siding by 11:30 instead of 11:20 when the freight was due. The accident occurred between those times. It was also evident that the conductor of the freight did not know about the work train else he would have stopped beyond the siding and awaited its arrival.

Whatever its cause, it was a nasty wreck but it was only one of many which the Age of Steam seemed to make inevitable.

## A CONTRAST IN SCHOOLS

The Oneonta High School from which we were graduated in the year of peace 1913, was a good school. The building on Academy Street, now the northerly structure in the Junior High School complex, was brand new and the equipment was the best that the period afforded. The teachers knew their subjects and were past masters of the art of imparting their knowledge to kids. The curriculum was adequate for the times.

We live in a different world today, however, and curricula have had to be expanded to keep pace with the tremendous increases in knowledge, especially in the field of technology, which a half century of incessant change has brought about. We got thinking of this the other day as we leafed through the OHS handbook.

Spanish, world history and economics; Russian and Latin American studies; local government and diplomatic history; calculus, statistics and law of probability - these are subjects which are offered in the beautiful school on East Street but which were not taught in high schools in the years 1909-1913. If a boy wanted to learn about those matters, he must wait until he got to college.

Physical education and sports were sadly neglected when we were in high school. Basketball and baseball were the only varsity sports and if you played neither one, you were out of the physical education picture. Contrast that situation with the one of today when OHS has interscholastic teams in the following sports: football, basketball, wrestling, baseball, track, badminton, table tennis, (ping pong to you greybeards), bowling, volleyball, cross country, tennis, golf, swimming, gymnastics, rifle and soccer.

Present day students have a much greater choice as to subjects studied than we did. There are certain requirements for the OHS and Regents diplomas but beyond that the students may select from a considerable variety of subjects.

In our day four courses were offered - Normal Entrance, College Entrance, Technical and Commercial. There was little choice of subjects within those classifications. You could choose either French or German as your modern language and you could elect not to go further in mathematics than algebra and plane geometry but that was about all the leeway you had.

If you were going to college, four years of Latin was a requirement, plus four years of English (including grammar), three years of history and three years of science. The history courses were Ancient, English and American, the first two of which are no longer taught as separate subjects, at least not locally.

The sciences offered in our day were biology, physics and chemistry. The teaching was superior and the laboratory facilities were excellent for the time. Bear in mind that in 1913 the atom had not yet been split, the science of electronics was non-existent and the computer had not yet been invented. In chemistry, celluloid was the only plastic and synthetic fibers were yet to come.

We started by saying that the OHS we attended was a good school and we will close by saying that the OHS of today is a better school, superior in many ways. We have always been proud of OHS, our Alma Mater, and that pride increases each time we visit the school and observe what is going on there.

## A GOOD PLACE TO STAY

Farmer Jones drove into the stableyard of the Wilson House in Oneonta one morning near the turn of the century and tossed the reins to a hostler. He was making one of his rare overnight visits to the big town and he had chosen the hotel at the corner of Market and Chestnut Streets for several reasons.

He could have gone to the big Central Hotel facing Broad Street but that hostelry was a bit too fashionable for his tastes. The Windsor on Chestnut Street offered the novelty of the only passenger elevator in town but the newfangled device didn't interest Jones much.

The Arlington Hotel in the Wooden Row on Main Street was a cozy place but it had no horse barn since it catered only to drummers and other train traveling people. There was the big Hathaway House across from the railroad station, the Brunswick Hotel at Broad and Market (now Winney's) and a number of small inns. Oneonta was well supplied with homes-away-from-home in the horse and buggy days.

The farmer had stayed before at the Wilson House and he liked its homey atmosphere and the splendid table it set. Furthermore, Doc Brand, a veterinarian, presided over the stable. The off horse of his matched team was ailing and Jones wanted the vet to take a look at her. Perhaps the most important factor was that his dog, his ever present companion, would be well taken care of, with a comfortable kennel and ample provender.

Jones had a lot of shopping to do which was why he was staying the night. He needed a new Sunday outfit and he intended to visit the Carr & Bull, Gib Bligh and Oneonta Department stores where he would dicker for a ten or twelve dollar suit, with a necktie and a pair of suspenders thrown in. He would get a pair of Congress shoes with elastic sides at George Kirkland's.

He needed a window sash so he would drop in at the Briggs & Miller mill on the corner of Main and South Main and while he was in that vicinity would take a look at the automobiles in Art Butts' place. The contrivance was just a passing fancy of course, but he was curious.

And then he would visit George Moore's drugstore for a chat with the owner, a Delaware county boy like himself, and to buy one of those delicious chocolate sodas. George had confided to him that the unmatched flavor was obtained by adding just the right amount of cinnamon to the syrup.

He would eat dinner at the Wilson House and then shop during the afternoon. He planned to have steamed clams at Johnny Baker's famous restaurant in the Wooden Row. A road company was playing "The Merry Widow" at the Oneonta Theatre and he wanted to see the musical. Then a drink at the basement bar at the Wilson House and he would be ready for bed.

The Wilson House, which Jones and thousands of other sojourners found so much to their liking, was razed in 1966 and its site converted into a parking lot. It was opened in 1893 with C.M. Hickok as the first proprietor. It had its ups and downs over the years but most of the time it was noted for its excellent food and was a mecca for Sunday diners. The Rotary Club met there during the 1940s. Its career as a hotel ended in 1955.

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new."

## A PEACEFUL YEAR

Through the years technology has wrought its miracles but man himself has changed but little and the basic problems which he faces are those with which his forebears wrestled.

We have foreign policy problems today but so did our fathers a half century ago. We complain of high taxes but so did our ancestors in 1916, and in 1906, in 1886, 1836 and 1776. We talk of the delinquency of youth and of declining moral standards as if these questions are of recent origin whereas they have been the subjects of sermons and editorials ever since we have had churches and newspapers.

For instance, consider December of 1916 in Oneonta. Generally speaking it was a happy holiday season but there were clouds on the horizon. The slogan, "He kept us out of war", had contributed to the re-election of President Wilson in that fall's election but it was beginning to appear that he couldn't do it much longer and people were getting worried.

The problem of ever increasing taxes had citizens on edge. The city budget for 1917 had just been announced and it involved the expenditure of \$69,055. Where was all that money coming from if not from heavier taxes? The police department wanted \$8,955 and the fire department \$10,750. Public works projects would cost \$22,735 and welfare would amount to \$2,850.

These problems and others, including the high divorce rate which was worrying the Womans Club, were more or less forgotten, however, for the holiday weeks. There were dinner parties and dances galore for folks of every age. Among the boys and girls home from college for the 1916 holidays were:

Cornell - Ernest Bolton, Lowell Huntington; Syracuse - Margaret Watkeys, Josephine Lauren; Wesleyan - Dewitt Ford; Amherst - Alfred Carr, John Bell; Williams - Lincoln Kellogg; Vassar - Margaret Morris; Emma Willard - Alice Ford, Mabel Elmore; Wellesley - Genevieve Whipple, Ethelyn Morse; Hamilton - Stanton Pendleton, Daniel Luce, Lynn Horton, Edwin Moore; West Point - Augustus Gurney; Middlebury - Mable Hoyt; Harvard - Sherman Fairchild, Collis Huntington Halladay; University of Colorado - Douglas McCrum; Mt. Holyoke - Alice Kilkenny; RPI - Arthur and Edward Polley, Marvin Reynolds; University of Pennsylvania - Walter Goldsmith.

Christmas business had been good with a lot of shoppers in town, among them 250 who came on an Ulster & Delaware Railroad excursion. Stores belonging to the Merchants Association were open every night beginning December 21.

L.C. Millard, proprietor of the Hotel Oneonta, was taking over the fifth floor of the hostelry, the City Club having relinquished its lease. He advertised a Christmas dinner of many courses with the guests repairing after the repast to the ballroom on the top floor where there would be dancing.

William H. Lunn and Ralph S. Wyckoff had rented the vacant lot at the corner of East and Spruce Streets and were preparing to flood it to provide skating for holiday merrymakers.

Christmas week the next year would not be so joyous since hundreds of Oneonta boys would be in France and in training camps in this country but that was in the unknown future. In 1916, peace, at least in the United States, and good will toward men, were still in effect.

## OTSEGO'S MEN OF LETTERS

Although he was most certainly the most famous of them all, James Fenimore Cooper was by no means Otsego county's only man of letters. Dozens of other made important contributions through the years in many different fields of literary endeavor.

The Coopers were something of a writing dynasty, each generation providing one or more authors. Judge William Cooper started things off with "A Guide to the Wilderness", an excellent treatise on pioneering in New York State. Then came James Fenimore Cooper, the first American author to receive international recognition.

James' daughter Susan wrote many stories of country life, the best known being "Rural Hours". A younger James Fenimore Cooper gave us "Legends of a Northern County", which, of course was Otsego. His sons, Paul and another James Fenimore; G. Pomeroy Keese, Constance (Pomeroy) Woolson and Claire Benedict were other members of the Cooper writing clan.

Oneonta has contributed several authors of more than local fame. Loomis J. Campbell, the community's first college graduate (Hamilton, 1856) wrote a widely sold history of the United States and several textbooks which sold in the millions and edited the Merriam Webster Dictionary as well as the famed Farmer's Almanac.

Willard Huntington Wright was not a native of Oneonta but he spent much time here and his first novel, "A Man of Promise," has the community as its locale. He wrote many learned books on philosophy and art but his fame rests upon the fact that, under the pseudonym of S.S. VanDine, he created one of the immortals of detective fiction, the supercilious but erudite deductive genius known as Philo Vance.

Rhoda Williams, wife of an Oneonta butcher, wrote several love novels in the fashion of Mary Jane Holmes. Poems by Andrew B. Saxton, long editor of the Oneonta Herald, are contained in various anthologies of American verse.

The Cookes of Cooperstown were another writing family. Dr. Joseph Cooke wrote several books on obstetrics. His son Charles wrote "The Big Show" which was the Harper Find of the Year in 1938. The physician's wife, Constance Cottin, and two other children, Ursala and Joseph, also got their work in print.

Dr. Louis C. Jones of Cooperstown, director of the New York State Historical Society, has had several popular books of folklore published, while Della T. Lutes also of Cooperstown, turned out "The Country Kitchen", a classic volume on rural foods and cooking. John Durant of New Lisbon has written several pictorial histories of sport and entertainment while the historical work of the Butterfields of Hartwick is well known.

Jabez D. Hammond, a Cherry Valley attorney, wrote "The History of Political Parties in the State of New York", a standard work, as well as, under the pen name of "Pansy", 75 pious stories of the kind found in Sunday School libraries. Sheldon Stoddard of Gilbertsville was a regular contributor of short stories to "The Youths Companion", for years a leading magazine for juveniles.

We have not exhausted the list of Otsego authors but those names will indicate the scope and versatility of the county's people who have worked with the written word.

## HARTWICK'S BEGINNING

Near chaos reigned in the big brick Walling Mansion at the corner of Main Street and Walling Avenue during the first days of September, 1928. Carpenters, plumbers, electricians and painters were busy all over the place while amidst the din and the confusion, President Myers and Dean Norlie were trying to consummate plans for the beginning of the first year of Hartwick College.

A faculty of five professors, ten instructors and five part-time teachers had been assembled and a curriculum of 44 courses, 22 in each semester, had been adopted. There would be four courses each in English, history, mathematics and religion and two each in biology, education, French, German, Greek, orientation, psychology, sociology, business science, musical harmony, piano, pipe organ, violin and voice.

The first president of the college was Charles R. Myers, who had been head of Hartwick Seminary, and the five full professors were Dean Olaf M. Norlie, head of the departments of orientation, psychology and religion; Elbina M. Bender, professor of English, French and Latin; Mary G. Haseman, professor of mathematics; Harold T. Mead, professor of biology and instructor in education and sociology; and Otto L. Schreiber, professor of history.

Lutheran pastors Philip M. Luther and Robert J. VanDeusen had been in the field for some months corralling students and it was thought that the first class would consist of about 25 boys and girls. To the amazement of everyone, 106 students, 98 of them full time freshmen, applied for admission. College opened on September 19 and by the end of the first week the enrollment had climbed to 175 and more teachers had to be hired. By the end of the semester there were 235 students, a few of whom were part-time.

A college seems hardly a college without athletics and Hartwick began immediately to organize teams to represent the institution. They were freshman teams to be sure, but since all the students were freshmen the teams were in a true sense varsity aggregations.

The first football game was played at Poughkeepsie in October against the Eastman Business School and Hartwick got creamed, 67 to 0. The first home game was against Cazenovia Bible Institute and resulted in a 33 to 0 defeat for the Warriors. Oneonta High School won a close one, 15 to 6, and then the fourth defeat was administered by the Morrisville Aggies, 19 to 0. The season ended with a glorious 26 to 0 victory over the Cobleskill Aggies. The team would get better and better until by the late '40s, when the sport was abolished, Hartwick was regarded as one of the state's small college football powers.

Hartwick has just started its 40th year and the contrast with its beginnings in 1928 is astounding. The student body has increased from 106 to 1,576. The faculty has grown from 15 to 100. The first students had a choice of 44 different courses whereas today 281 different subjects are offered.

In 1928 one building was in course of construction on Oyaron Hill. The college would move into it from the crowded Walling Mansion in December of 1929. Today 17 beautiful structures, serviced by 125 people, dot the campus and the end is not yet.

Oneonta is justly proud of Hartwick College and has reason to believe that this pride can only increase as the years go by.

## IT CAME IN BULK

"I'll take a pound of rice," said the housewife to the shirt-sleeved country store keeper with the big, once white apron tied around his middle. The merchant plunged a scoop into a bin behind the counter and it came out full of white granules. Laying a sheet of brown paper on the scales, he carefully weighed out a pound, folded and crimped the paper and then tied the bundle with twine hanging from a beehive-like container suspended from the ceiling.

Today, when almost all articles, especially food, come packaged, it is hard to believe that a hundred years ago pre-packaging was unknown and that even at the turn of the century most of the merchandise that came into the store was in bulk form. Trade-marked articles were once virtually unknown. Some trade-marks go back a long way but the now almost universal custom of giving products a name is a comparatively new practice.

Back in the heyday of the country store, roughly the last quarter of the 19th century, sugar, flour and crackers came in barrels, molasses in hogsheads and coffee beans in burlap bags. Butter was spaded out of a crock or tub and cheese came in the form of a large wheel, with your purchase being cut in a wedge-shaped chunk.

Hardware items also came in bulk with the exception of carpet tacks, a widely used item in the days when every room in the house, except the kitchen and the bathroom, had wall-to-wall carpeting. Early in the last century manufacturers began using paper packages for different quantities of the tacks.

The first paper bags, now an almost indispensable adjunct in merchandising, were made by store clerks in their spare time. It is not known who invented the machine made paper bag but it did not make its appearance until after the Civil War.

In the early days green coffee beans were roasted in the family skillet and ground with a pestle and mortar. Later the beans were roasted by the jobber and pulverized by a hand operated coffee grinder in the country store. Chase and Sanborn was the first firm to sell packaged ground coffee. In those days boiling was the only method known to make the finished product so all coffee was of the same grind.

Before the Civil War about the only trademarked products were Babbitt's Lye, Burnett's Vanilla, Robert Burns cigars, Eagle Brand condensed milk and 1847 Rogers Bros Silverware. After 1870 more and more products were trademarked and packaged. The National Biscuit Company was the first manufacturer to put crackers in packages and Quaker Oats was the first cartoned cereal.

Even boots and shoes first came in bulk with the merchant keeping them in a wooden bin. Later they were packed 12 pairs to a carton and finally each pair had its cardboard box. In this connection it is interesting to note that for years shoes did not come in rights and lefts, all of the same size being made on the same last.

It is a far cry indeed from the country store of our forebears to the merchandise marts of today.

## THE MOST IMPORTANT DAY

What was the most important day in Oneonta's history? Was it when the railroad came to town or was it the day the city dedicated its municipal flying field and entered the air age. Or was it another day whose events shaped the community's future?

It is all a matter of opinion but in our judgment Oneonta has seen no greater day than August 29, 1865, when the first train pulled into the sleepy community of less than 800 inhabitants. The Albany & Susquehanna Railroad was the catalyst which triggered an industrial and population explosion which would last until well after the turn of the century. That day and the occasion in 1870 when work was started on the roundhouse, the precursor of extensive shops, made Oneonta a railroad town known from coast to coast.

Oneonta's first important day came in April of 1775 when John Vanderwerker starting clearing a patch of ground just inside the main entrance to what is now Neahwa Park, preparatory to building a log cabin, Oneonta's first dwelling. This presaged the building of a gristmill on the river and the formation of a community near it.

The next important date came in 1817 when a postoffice was established in the McDonald Tavern at the corner of Main and River Streets and Squire James McDonald became the first postmaster of the hamlet, then called Milfordville.

Then came April 17, 1830, when the act creating the Town of Oneonta was passed by the state legislature. On the first of the following March the township was formally organized, resulting in the change of name of the hamlet's postoffice from Milfordville to Oneonta.

The next important day was in 1834 when the Charlotte Turnpike was opened to traffic. This changed the business center from the corner of River and Main to "up-town" Oneonta and caused a decided increase in mercantile activity and in population growth.

On October 27, 1848, Oneonta became an incorporated village and in an election held on December 2 of that year, Eliakim Reed Ford became Oneonta's first president. The community's centennial celebration was held in 1848 but it has always seemed to us that Oneonta was 173, instead of 100 years old at that time inasmuch as 1775 was the year when the first settlement was made within the present city limits.

Then came August 29, 1865, when the railroad came to town and the village started to really grow. Another date we regard as most important is September 4, 1889, when the State Normal School was dedicated. This great institution has grown through the years to a size and an importance in Oneonta's economic pattern which were probably not even dreamed of by those who were responsible for its location here.

September 26, 1928, when Hartwick College formally opened with exercises in the Palace Theatre and with 106 students on the rolls, was another very important day with far reaching results.

And then came September 17, 1966, when the Oneonta Municipal Airport was dedicated and the community acquired air service, the fastest growing transportation medium. The importance of this forward step is incalculable.

Significant as all of the foregoing dates are, we believe that the most important day was August 29, 1865, when the railroad arrived and Oneonta's dreams and aspirations became possible of fulfillment.

## A FAMOUS HOSTELRY

High on the Wall of Manitou it stood for over a hundred years, its white pillared facade visible for many miles up and down the long reaches of the Hudson River. When the enormous Catskill Mountain House was put to the torch in 1963 a landmark known to millions passed out of existence.

When the famous hostelry closed its doors in 1942 after 120 years of continuous operation an era ended for the Catskill Mountains. There are still many summer resorts in Greene, Ulster, Delaware and Sullivan counties and thousands of people spend the hot months there, but these locations are mostly in the valleys and on the lower mountain slopes. The huge and palatial hotels which once occupied the high plateaus are long gone and their extensive grounds have reverted to the wilderness out of which they were cleared.

When the Catskill Mountain House was built in 1832 on a rocky escarpment high on the mountain back of Catskill-on-the-Hudson, 65 per cent of the population of the United States was concentrated on the Atlantic slope between the Alleghenies and the ocean. This distribution of population gave the Catskills an unparalleled geographical importance and made them the focus of the summer entertainment industry in the eastern part of the country.

The Mountain House was enlarged through the years until it became a structure 300 feet in width and nearly 200 feet deep with accommodations for over 500 guests. A piazza 140 feet long graced the front portico with its 13 Corinthian columns. The hotel owned about 3,000 acres of forest land including two lakes. Miles of trails led to scenic vantage points.

For many years the Catskill Mountain House was the cultural, intellectual and political summer capital of the eastern United States. To it repaired the political greats, the artists, the writers, the philosophers and the arbiters of fashion. It was the birthplace of the Hudson River School of painters. James Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving, William Cullen Bryant and other authors patronized it and extolled its virtues.

Until 1870 the only access to the Mountain House was a steep, tortuous road traversed by stagecoaches from Catskill. Then the railroads came and the picture changed. We doubt if many people who ride the DO Line know that it is the terminal segment of the railroad which opened the Catskills to vacationers and which once carried hundreds of thousands of pleasure seeking passengers.

Construction on the Ulster & Delaware was started at Kingston in 1866 and by 1870 had reached Phoenicia whence a spur was pushed up Stony Clove to Hunter, deep in the mountains. In 1883 this was extended to South Lake, on the very back doorstep of the Mountain House. During this period the Hotel Kaaterskill, the Grand Hotel at Pine Hill and other large hostgeries were opened.

In 1892 the Otis Elevated Railroad, the first of its kind in America, was built from the base of the mountain up the steep incline to the Mountain House. This was in operation until 1916.

In 1962 the State of New York acquired the Catskill Mountain House Property. The hotel had been partially demolished during the 1950s for the salvage value of its materials and during the winter of 1963 what remained was deliberately burned.

## THE OLD AND WEARY

The railroad was Old and Weary almost from the day of its birth. Hastily built, with poor road bed, hickory ties, flimsy trestles and light weight rails, it is a wonder that the New York, Ontario and Western Railway, as the O.&W. was officially named, ever survived its childhood. Live it did, however, and for nearly 85 years the rambling, inefficient railroad offered promise to a large rural population, even though that promise was never entirely fulfilled.

Stretching from Weehawken on the Hudson to Oswego on the shores of Lake Ontario, the road traversed Chenango and Delaware counties, giving such communities as Delhi, Walton, Oxford and Norwich their only rail contact with the outside world. It met the Delaware & Hudson at Sidney and had connections elsewhere with the Erie, the West Shore, the New York Central, the Delaware & Northern and a score of other small lines.

Unlike the D.&H., which in its heyday was one of the most prosperous railroads in the country and is still among the better railroad properties, the O.&W. was always in trouble. It had its days of glory, however, and when the persevering old wreck drew its last breath in 1957 there was sincere regret upon the part of thousands.

One reason for the continued difficulties of the O.&W. was the original choice of route. The line rambled over the hills and valleys of some of the roughest country in New York State with little regard for grades. There were many trestles and tunnels, expensive to build and to maintain.

Instead of choosing natural routes which touched industrial centers, the promoters laid out a line which twisted and turned so that it could pass through communities which could give it little business but which had provided funds for its construction. For example, Syracuse whose business might have saved the road, was bypassed because the city would not float a bond issue to provide construction funds. Other cities and villages were left off the route when they refused to cooperate.

The O.&W. was the result of the virulent railroad fever which swept the country following the Civil War. Here was the answer to bad roads, slow canal service and the humdrum of country living. About every community in the state dreamed of a railroad but the desire for contact with the outside world was especially strong in the area lying between the New York Central and Erie systems.

On October 4, 1865, representatives from ten counties, including Otsego, as well as delegates from New York City, met at Delhi and adopted a resolution favoring a railroad running from near New York northwestward through the counties represented. A subsequent meeting was held in New York and then early the next year the group met in Albany and effected the incorporation of the New York & Oswego Midland Railroad Company. Funds were raised and work was started.

Construction was barely completed when in 1873 the line went into its first receivership. In the reorganization the road was renamed the New York, Ontario and Western Railway. The railroad went on its sometimes merry but often sad way until 1957 when it gave up the ghost and the rails and equipment were sold for junk.

The O.&W. was born in agony and it died in agony but in between those events it was an important part of the way of life of scores of communities and of thousands of people.

## THE ONEONTA FAIR

All morning long the people streamed into town. They came in surreys, in carry-alls and in buckboards; they risked the hazards of motor travel and came in the new-fangled automobiles, but mostly they came by train and trolley.

Every regular train on the Delaware & Hudson, the Ulster & Delaware and the Otsego & Herkimer was crowded and excursion trains brought thousands from Albany, Troy and Schenectady, from Binghamton, Scranton and Kingston, from Cooperstown, Richfield Springs, Utica and Herkimer.

By 2 p.m. of a beautiful September day in 1910 over 30,000 people had jammed into the grounds of the Central New York Fair, the largest single day's attendance in the long history of an institution which meant much to the Oneonta of yore.

The Oneonta Fair, by which name it was generally known, was regarded as second in importance only to the State Fair and was always held the week following the latter event with the result that many exhibits and entertainment features came directly here from Syracuse. The Fair was Oneonta's biggest annual event and was eagerly looked forward to.

The Oneonta Union Agricultural Society, which ran the Fair, was organized in 1872. A part of the Couse farm embracing what is now Belmont Circle and some of Hudson Street, was purchased, a grandstand and exhibition buildings were erected and a half mile track laid out. The first fair was held in 1874 and yearly exhibitions were held through 1926.

Fair week was a bonanza for the merchants of Oneonta. Stores were open every night and there was a general feeling of carnival. Charles K. Champlin and his repertory company always played the Oneonta Theatre during that week, serving warmed-over Broadway classics to capacity crowds.

It was a great week for the kids. There was no school for two afternoons and on one of them school children were admitted free to the grounds. Your parents probably wouldn't let you go downtown for the evening fun and excitement but perhaps you could inveigle them into taking you to the theatre at least once during the week.

George I. Wilber, who was the mainspring of the Fair, saw to it that the entertainment features were the best obtainable. The sulky races were exciting although in all probability most of them were won in the stables. Also, no owner wanted to risk "marking" a good horse for a comparatively low purse so the races were not too fast.

The huge crowd in 1910 resulted from the fact that it had been widely advertised that the first airplaine flight ever made in the valley would occur on that day. The Curtiss plane had been shipped in and assembled on an improvised airfield on the Kerr farm across the river.

The "intrepid airman", Joseph Seymour, took a trial flight the day before and, according to the Herald: "The machine went up well but when about 40 feet above the ground it encountered a slack place in the air and pitched downward." The pilot was unhurt but the plane was damaged beyond immediate repair and the flight had to be cancelled.

We would love to attend the Oneonta Fair come September but the time when that could be done is 43 years in the past.

## THE EVA COO CASE

"Dr. Getman, I know that you have given a verdict of accidental death in the case of Harry Wright but I would advise that you re-open the case. There are some things that don't look right to me."

Such was the gist of a phone call which Earl Ames of the Metropolitan Life Insurance agency in Oneonta made from the Tillapaugh Funeral Home in Schenevus to Dr. Norman Getman, an Otsego county coroner, on the morning of Saturday, June 16, 1934. It was that call which broke the case and started the notorious Eva Coo on her way to Sing Sing and a rendezvous with death.

A local newsman was widely acclaimed as the person who first suspected foul play. A crime magazine gave him a monetary award and featured him in an article. A few years ago a TV program gave the news sleuth the same recognition.

The reporter covered the story in good fashion and doubtless was of aid to the authorities but it was not he who caused the reopening of a case that had been written off as a hit-and-run motor fatality. That distinction must go to Earl Ames who was the first to suggest that the hand of Eva Coo might have been at work.

Following the phone call Ames met with Dr. Getman and District Attorney Donald H. Grant in an Oneonta restaurant and told them his suspicions. According to the insurance man, his company had policies on Wright, with the Coo woman as beneficiary, which would pay \$19,000 in case of accidental death.

The preceding morning Mrs. Coo had asked state troopers to search for her handyman who had failed to come home following a visit to Oneonta. They found Wright's body by the side of Route 7 about 200 feet from the Coo roadhouse near Maryland. Dr. Earl Winsor of Schenevus, acting as medical examiner, declared the death to be accidental and the coroner so certified. The body was taken to the undertaking parlors in Schenevus and the troopers closed their investigation.

Ames went to the tavern to obtain Eva's signature on some papers and while there noticed that the woman was extremely nervous. Her hands shook and she was perspiring freely. He then went to the undertaking rooms for more signatures and Reva Tillapaugh told him that there were marks on Wright's head and body which the undertaker did not think could result from an accident. It was then that the insurance agent phoned Dr. Getman and that things began to move.

Within 24 hours Eva Coo and Martha Clift, one of her "hostesses", had been arrested and charged with first degree murder. It was disclosed at the trial that Eva had hit Wright on the head with a mallet near a deserted house on Crumhorn Mountain and that the Clift woman had then run over him with an automobile. The body was taken down the mountain and dumped where it was found.

The trial was the most sensational ever held in the county and attracted dozens of big city reporters, including Dorothy Kilgallen. The presiding justice was Riley Heath and Donald H. Grant was the prosecutor. The defense attorneys were Everett B. Holmes and James J. Byard, Jr., with the latter doing the trial work.

Eva was convicted of "Murder One" and sentenced to death while her accomplice, Martha Clift, was found guilty of second degree murder and given a life sentence. Eva Coo was electrocuted on June 28 of the following year, the fifth woman to die on the "hot seat" in New York State.

## THE COUNTRY STORE

John Flintlock disliked to take a whole day off from his farm work. It was drizzling and he couldn't work in the fields but there was harness to be mended and a wagon to repair, kindling to be chopped and work to be done on the Dutch oven in his kitchen.

As he loaded such barter items as butter, eggs, maple syrup and potatoes into the buckboard, Flintlock went over in his mind the list of goods which he would pick up at the country store some miles away. He needed nails and some copper rivets for harness repair, salt for his cattle and powder for his rifle, while his wife wanted needles and buttons, pepper and table salt, tea, coffee, cinnamon and nutmeg.

Even in the days of subsistence farming, when nearly everything that was eaten, worn or used by the family was produced on the home acres, the country store was a necessity. The visits of the peddler were infrequent and unpredictable as to time and, since there were indispensable items which the farmer could not raise or make, there had to be a place where they could be obtained.

The country store flourished for two hundred years or more as an American institution. The storekeeper was close on the heels of the pioneer wherever the latter went, and he brought to frontier civilization a touch of the outside world. The stock of the average country store was somewhat limited in variety but there was always a touch of the exotic - tea from China, green coffee beans from Mocha and Java, indigo from Madras, lemons from the Azores and raisins and citron from the shores of the Mediterranean.

When the farmer passed from a subsistence to a cash crop basis - in Otsego county the change came during the period from 1810 to 1830 - the country store became more of a necessity and the number of different items multiplied until the place became a veritable department store, although there was little segregation of merchandise in the early days. The sugar barrel might stand next to a keg of nails and the inevitable wheel of cheese was apt to share counter space with bolts of muslin and cotton sheeting.

The country store was a grocery and a meat market, a hardware store and a boot and shoe shop, a confectionery store and a tobacconist's, a drugstore and a crockery emporium, where you could buy everything from salt cellars to thundermugs.

It was also a place for informal town meetings with the farmers and townspeople gathering around the big stove and exchanging news and bits of rural philosophy while munching crackers and cheese filched from the store's stock.

If the proprietor was of the same political persuasion as the national administration, the country store was usually the postoffice and there was always a crowd awaiting the sorting of the mail. The average storekeeper was not a particularly efficient postal servant and sometimes a letter would fall behind a pickle barrel, not to be found until some months later when the empty container was removed.

Much more could be said about this pleasant place, which, in addition to being a merchandising center, served as a men's club, a place for gossip of both the male and female varieties, and as a forum for the discussion of the issues of the day.

## AN ABSORBING STORY

We have been reading a most interesting book. The story-line has been rather hard to follow since over 8,000 characters play out hundreds of subplots but, drawing upon memory and imagination, we were able to piece out the tale.

The book gives a vivid picture of the Oneonta of 1904 as viewed in the pages of the village directory, which may seem just a drab recital of names, addresses and occupations but which gives a pretty good description of a town if you know how to read it. And if you lived, even as a boy of nine, in the period in which the directory was compiled, the names therein will suggest a hundred stories - of success and failure, of tranquility and tragedy.

Oneonta was an incorporated village in 1904 with trustees instead of aldermen representing the six wards. The trustees chose from their number a president of the corporation, equivalent to today's mayor. In 1904 the president was Nathan H. Briggs, father of Roscoe C. Briggs.

The educational system of the village consisted of the big wooden High School on Academy Street and ward schools on River and Center Streets. W.C. Franklin was superintendent of schools, presiding over a total of 24 teachers.

The State Normal School occupied what is now known as Old Main, at the head of Maple Street. That was the time when you could enter the big red structure as a kindergartner, spend 14 school years under one roof and come out with a high school diploma and a teaching certificate. Principal Percy I. Bugbee had 21 teachers under him.

In those days fraternal orders played a much larger part in men's lives than they do today. There were the various branches of the Masons and the Oddfellows and in addition the following lodges, many of them not now in existence: Knights of Pythias, Order of the Golden Seal, Royal Arcanum, Knights of Columbus, Knights of Honor, Ancient Order of United Workmen, Improved Order of Red Men, Order of United American Mechanics, Knights of the Maccabees, Catholic Benevolent Association and its ladies' auxiliary, and the National Protective Legion.

The classified business directory tells a lot about what Oneonta was like in 1904. The automobile had entered the picture but it was still somewhat of a plaything and the directory lists not a single auto dealer or mechanic although there were three bicycle dealers and four bicycle repair shops.

The horse and buggy era was still in full blossom and six blacksmiths are listed, together with two carriage painters, two carriage repositories, three harness makers, three wagon manufacturers and six livery stables.

Another indication of how life has changed is that in 1904 Oneonta had eight merchant tailoring establishments, 35 dressmaking shops and 11 millinery stores. One lone electrician is listed. A few of the stores had electric lights but very few homes were wired for the undependable and dangerous current.

There were eight flourishing hotels, seven saloons and one cafe. Since each hostelry had a bar there were 16 places where thirst could be alleviated. These were strictly male resorts, however. Women were never seen in bars and a teenager couldn't get within yards of the swinging doors.

## EARLY FLYING DAYS

It was exactly 1:22 p.m. on Saturday, May 6, 1927, when Pilot Carlton Hinman touched the wheels of the Canadian Curtiss JN4C to the ground on Keyes Airport off the Country Club Road, thus inaugurating service on Oneonta's first public facility for the use of those engaged in the comparatively new but rapidly growing business of flying.

Aviation first came to Oneonta in 1910 when a barnstormer hired to provide thrills for the patrons of the Oneonta Fair made an abortive flight from a pasture on the Southside. The next year Walter Johnson made several successful flights during Fair week and so captivated two young native Oneontans, Frank Burnside and Earl Fritts, that they took flying lessons and were soon among the few men in the world licensed to fly airplanes.

Fritts made a few flights from the Kerr farm across the river and had a brief barnstorming career. Burnside, however, went on to become one of the country's best known pilots. He flew the airmail with Lindbergh, was the first person to fly from Miami to Havana, held the world's altitude record at one time and flew in some of the first motion pictures in which planes were used, being the pilot for such stars as Irene Castle, Lillian Walker and Edith Day.

Following World War I the air was filled with barnstorming former army pilots and Oneonta got its share. Some of them used the meadows bordering Country Club Road on the west and possibly that gave D.F. Keyes an idea.

Soon after George I. Wilber died in 1921 Mr. Keyes acquired control of the Oneonta Union Agricultural Society, which ran the Fair. The Fairgrounds were on land with great residential development potential and Mr. Keyes purchased a tract near the Country Club with the thought of moving the Fair there. The costs were too great, however, so Keyes, ever one to keep up with the times, conceived the idea of building an airport there.

The field opened in 1927 with Carl Hinman of Cooperstown, a competent pilot, as manager. A flying club was organized and instruction classes started. During the first year of operation 1031 passengers were carried on 986 flights without a single forced landing. Lessons were given to 25 students.

1928 Daniel Franklin purchased a Fairchild cabin plane, the future mayor thus becoming the second Oneontan to own a flying machine. Fritts had been the first. This plane was built by a native of the city, Sherman M. Fairchild, who was fast becoming a power in the burgeoning aviation industry. He invented the first successful aerial camera and built the first plane with an inclosed cockpit and the first plane with retractable wings.

An administration building and hangars were added to the field's equipment and the airport was the scene of considerable flying activity until it suspended operations in 1954. Hinman was succeeded as manager by Charles Georgia and he, in the early '40s, by Captain James Morey who, incidentally, taught Steve Low to fly.

The F.&F. Airport on the old Young farm to the east of the city started operations about nine years ago and was Oneonta's only aviation facility until the opening of the Municipal Airport climaxed nearly a half century of hope and frustration.

## THE INDIAN NEEDED WOOD

The first white settlers in this valley had it hard enough. They brought with them little but an axe and a rifle and with this scant equipment they had to secure their food, make a clearing in the forest and build a log shelter.

The Indians who inhabited these lands for thousands of years had a much more difficult task, however. They too had to fell trees, build houses, kill game and catch fish for food, plant vegetables and protect themselves against the depredations of wild beasts and their fellow redskins. They had neither metal tools nor gunpowder and had to work with such crude implements of stone, wood and bone as they could fashion themselves.

We speak of primitive Indian cultures as being of the "stone age" whereas "wood age" would be more appropriate, for to the Indian wood was the great necessity, since from it he made his home, his canoe and his bow and arrow. There was an abundance of wood of every sort in the valley but with neither metal axe nor knife the redskin had to labor hard and long to bring down a tree.

He first built fires at the bases of the trees he desired, ringing the trunks with clay to keep the flames from going too far. Fire will not cut deeply into green timber with a charred surface and it was here that the stone axe, or celt, came into play. The Indian would hack off the charred wood, leaving a fresh surface for the flames to attack. Eventually the tree would fall.

The Iroquois in their later years made some use of trade axes and other metal tools and weapons but the early Indians made all of their implements out of stone, except such small articles as needles and fishhooks which could be fashioned out of the bones of the larger game birds.

There was plenty of native stone in the region but it was largely limestone, sandstone, or shale. These comparatively soft rocks were useful for many purposes but they could not be worked to a cutting edge. Without sharp knives and weapons the red man would have been unable to survive and the glacial drifts were his salvation, for in these ancient deposits were flint, chert and other tough igneous rocks.

The making of arrow and spear points was an art which the Indian developed to a high degree. Contrary to popular opinion, the Indian did not use fire to shape his points. He chipped the chunks of flint with curving blows of a hammerstone, the impact causing shell-shaped, or conchoidal, chips to fly off. This process was repeated until the arrowhead or spearhead took its general form. Often times these partly finished blades were laid aside for trading purposes and were known as cache blades.

The roughed-out blade was finished to its final form with a bone chipping tool by giving the instrument a twisting or curving motion whereby small flakes were chipped off.

Most of the thousands of artifacts which have been found in this region are of native stone or of flint or chert but some are made of such foreign stone as chalcedony from the West and jasper and argillite from the South.

The Yager Museum at Hartwick College contains a splendid collection of Indian artifacts, including implements of war and of the chase, such as arrow and spearpoints; articles of domestic use like mortars and pestles, axes, scrapers and fragments of pottery; and articles of personal use and religious significance like gorgets and pendants, pipes, banner stones and amulets.

## A DISCIPLE OF STEAM

You will probably never see the name of Leonor Fresnel Loree linked with those of such railroad greats as Huntington, Harriman and Hill, Vanderbilt and Gould; yet the man who guided the destinies of the Delaware & Hudson Railroad from 1907 until he retired in 1938 at the age of 80 was probably as good an operating chief as any of those famous men.

He not only made the D.&H. one of the most profitable lines in the country but he gave it a fame out of all proportion to its modest mileage.

L.F.Loree was a thorn in the side of both capital and labor. His loud and uncompromising voice argued for super power in locomotives, for a day's work for a day's pay, for tight administration and for freedom in management.

This titan in the railroad industry, whose bewhiskered profile was once well known in Oneonta, worked his way up to become a junior locomotive engineer on the Pennsy, the first rung on his ladder of success. At the age of 28 he became general manager of the Pennsylvania Lines West and then, successively, president of three railroads, chairman of the board of two more and a director in six others.

He became president of the Delaware & Hudson in 1907 and from that time until his retirement he was a one man show, developing a high capacity, low cost transportation system which, until the depression, gave its stockholders a steady nine per cent return upon their investment.

Furthermore, he gave the D.&H. a world wide reputation as a pioneer in the development of steam locomotives. The most powerful engines in the country ran on the railroad and countless innovations and improvements were given to the industry.

Experimental locomotives of radical design were turned out by the American Locomotive Company at Schenectady and by the D.&H. shops in Colonie and Oneonta. Loree got many of his ideas from Europe and some of his engines would have looked very much at home in Great Britain, France or Germany.

While president of the Baltimore & Ohio, Loree introduced the Mallet engine to America and astonished the industry. When he became head of the D.&H. he put an 0-8-8-0 compound "Mother Hubbard" Mallet on the Carbondale to Oneonta run and found that it could do the work of three of the new 2-8-0's then in use. (This designation shows the number and distribution of wheels, the first and last digits referring to the wheels under the front end and the cab while the middle ones denote driving wheels).

In 1910 Alco delivered to the D.&H. six 0-8-8-0's. They were the most powerful locomotives ever built and replaced 12 big engines of another type. Loree kept experimenting and gave the railroad the first four cylinder, triple expansion, non-articulated compound locomotives in the world, the first engine ever built with roller bearing main rods and the first tender booster.

Following Loree's retirement, experimentation continued and many huge engines were built during the 1940s. Anthracite revenues were declining, however, and the road had to gear itself to the high speed work of a "bridge line". Whereas in Loree's day sheer power was the thing, now speed had to be added. Kept, however, were the D.&H. trademarks - capped stacks, streamlined boilers and recessed headlights.

## NEAR STARVATION

The day before only quietly flowing water had met William Cooper's gaze but now the Susquehanna was boiling with fish - countless thousands of silvery cisco herring which had preceded the annual run of shad up the river from Chesapeake Bay. The founder of Cooperstown had gone to the river to think undisturbed about the plight of his colonists and what he saw delighted him.

The winter of 1788-89 had been a rough one and the people whom Cooper had brought into the wilderness were near starvation. There was not a pound of salt meat nor a single slice of bread in Cooperstown or its environs and many people were forced to live upon the roots of wild leeks and a syrup made of maple sugar and water.

The squire hastily assembled a band of workers and they constructed a small net by interweaving twigs. With this rude device they took fish by the thousands. Within ten days each family had an ample supply of fish. Cooper obtained from the state legislature, then in session, 1,700 bushels of corn and this was packed in on the backs of horses. The crisis was over.

Cooper, the state's foremost pioneer colonizer, had acquired at foreclosure sale the vast Otsego County holdings of George Croghan, the first settler in the Cooperstown region. In 1785 Cooper set out from his Burlington, N.J. home to explore his lands. We'll let him tell about it.

"In 1785 I visited the rough and hilly country of Otsego, where there existed not an inhabitant, nor any trace of a road; I was alone, 300 miles from home, without bread, meat or food of any kind; fire and fishing tackle were my only means of subsistence. I caught trout in the brook and roasted them on the ashes. My horse fed on the grass that grew by the edge of the waters. I laid me down to sleep in my watch coat, nothing but the melancholy wilderness around me. In this way I explored the country, formed my plans for future settlement, and meditated upon the spot where a place of trade or a village should afterwards be established."

In May of 1786 Cooper started to sell his land and in 16 days disposed of 40,000 acres. Most of the purchasers moved their families at once to the Otsego wilderness and Cooper accompanied them, establishing a store and planning the village which was to bear his name.

The colonists were poor, with neither provisions to take with them nor money to buy any. For the next four years their lot was hard. Few could clear more than a small spot in the dense forests with the result that their crops grew mostly in the shade. Their corn did not ripen and their wheat was blasted. There was no mill closer than 20 miles to grind what little grain they could harvest.

Cooper did what he could to help them, giving credit and organizing parties to build roads and throw bridges across the many streams. He built a storehouse and each winter filled it with grain purchased elsewhere. The settlement grew slowly and by dint of hard work and privation, the settlers gradually became self supporting.

In 1790 Cooper brought his wife and several children, including James Fenimore Cooper, from New Jersey to Cooperstown and installed them in the frame house he had built.

## HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF

We are told that we live in a new age with vastly different problems than those of even a few years ago; that the atomic era bears little resemblance to the horse and buggy days and that the solutions of old have no present validity.

Science has made tremendous strides with its discoveries and its new applications of old theories but man himself has changed but little. The world revolves around each of us as it always has and our needs and aspirations remain substantially the same.

Go back through newspaper files for a hundred years and you will find history, in its fundamental aspects, repeating itself time after time. Speeches made in 1890, 1900, 1918 or 1944 concerning local, national or foreign affairs could be used today with little change.

President Johnson had his Wayne Morse and his J. William Fulbright but FDR had his Burton J. Wheeler and Wilson his Henry Cabot Lodge. The introduction of automation is disturbing the world of labor no more than did the start of the use of steam. The airplane is no more revolutionary than was the motor car. Man has been through it all before.

Let's go back to April of 1926 and see what the local problems were 43 years ago. Taxes were much too high and the working man's income much too low but the disparity had always existed and probably always would. Citizens were complaining that not enough was being done about the problems of water and sewage, of street repair and new sidewalks. Possibly you have heard some of these complaints in the present era.

The Chamber of Commerce had a meeting at which it was decided that two vital problems had to be tackled. First of all, an endeavor must be made to secure new industry for Oneonta. The railroads were booming and retail business was never better but, rightly, no one was satisfied. There were obstacles then to securing new businesses for the city and most of them still exist.

The second problem was parking space for the automobiles, which were increasing in numbers every day. Back in the horse and buggy days the village fathers had their parking and traffic difficulties and the advent of the bicycle augmented them. The buzz buggy was a vehicle of quite a different color however, and it was predicted that unless the parking problem was solved it would grow into vast proportions. It wasn't and it did.

The McFee and Borst woodworking mill on Market Street had been closed and it was proposed that its site, and adjoining property, be converted into a parking lot. The proposal seemed logical then, and it still does 40 some years later for that is precisely the spot that is presently being considered.

The Chamber was also urging the abolition of the many railroad grade crossings near the city. Practically all of them were eventually eliminated, including the very dangerous Pony Farm crossing.

There was one amusing item in the journals of the period. Justice A.L. Kellogg had just returned from Florida with the announcement that there was some activity in such resort areas as Palm Beach and Miami but that the general land boom had collapsed. It seemed to be his opinion that Florida would never amount to much. Well, no one can be right all the time. Some years before, a local dealer gave up the Ford agency because he could see no future for that make of automobile.

## FUN AND GAMES

In July of 1907 we were a 12 year old lad living on the north-east corner of Dietz and Walnut Streets. We had finished six grades at the Center Street School and in September would transfer to the seventh grade at the State Normal School. Let's take a look at the Oneonta of that period and see how a boy of our age fared for fun and games.

The village had a population of about 8,000 and it was strictly a horse and buggy town, but so were Binghamton and Utica, Albany and even New York City. The automobile was coming into the picture but in 1907 there were only 30 cars in all of Oneonta.

Railroading was the principal industry, with cigar making second in importance. Oneonta State Normal School was a teacher training institution with about 400 students while Hartwick College had not even been dreamed of. The business section was paved with brick but all of the residential streets were still dirt roads.

What could a small boy do for fun? Plenty, but he had to take his fun where he found it. There was no organized recreation of any kind. The Boy Scouts had not yet reached Oneonta and the YMCA was for railroad workers. There were no service clubs nor American Legion to foster youth programs. There were no parks, nor were there public swimming pools, tennis courts or baseball diamonds.

Kids swam in the famous holes in the Susquehanna River - the Strawberry, the Willow, the Oar and Black Bridges; in the Normal reservoir and the Electric Light Pond; or in small pools in the Oneonta and Silver Creeks. They played baseball hour after hour on vacant lots or in the streets, which absence of motor traffic made reasonably safe.

Hiking was always in order. Your leg muscles were well developed from walking to and from school no matter how far you lived from the institution and the climb up Franklin Mountain to the Vlei was a breeze. The Table Rocks got a big play from our Walnut Street gang. On most of our expeditions into the country we would pick up a few Indian artifacts which we would take to Willard Yager at the Long House on Ford Avenue. He would patiently explain what the stone implements were used for and how they were made.

During the long summer evenings the gang would play cops and robbers, duck-on-a-rock or kick-the-stick. Or perhaps we could persuade our parents to let us go to the Casino, Oneonta's first movie theatre, which had just opened in the Westcott block on Main Street. This would cost you half of your weekly allowance of ten cents so trips to the movies were infrequent unless you could negotiate a loan from the old man.

Certain it is that the kid of long ago never found time hanging heavy on his hands. The problem was to decide which of many exciting things he should do; whether to go swimming or to explore the crags of the Table Rocks, whether to organize a baseball game or go down to the railroad station and watch the trains come in.

What if it rained? Well, you could play with your small steam engine, work on your stamp collection or catch up on your reading in the American Boy. You could always find something to do even though there were no radio, TV or record players.

## CHANGES TIME HAS WROUGHT

Let's go back again to 1907 and see what Oneonta looked like to that lad of 12 who managed to have a lot of fun even though there was no organized recreation. In what respects has the community changed?

That boy is now a man of 74 and since he has always lived here he has seen tremendous changes but they have come gradually and are not so startling as they would be to one returning after 60 some years of absence. The latter would look in vain for many familiar landmarks.

In 1907 very few people who earned their living in Oneonta resided outside the village limits. People walked to work, to church and to market and they saw to it that their homes were not too far from those centers of activity. There were trolleys which went to the East and West Ends and to the Normal and they furnished a measure of public transportation. Most of the livery stables had horse drawn cabs for hire and there were a number of independent cabbies whose stands were mostly on Dietz Street near Main.

As far as groceries and meats were concerned your mother phoned her supplier and the order was delivered to her door. Of course she couldn't ask the Department Store, Sisson, Wilder or Ronan to send a load of drygoods for her selection so visits to those stores were necessary.

Westward, village living ended at about Kearney Street with farm land embracing all of the present West End and Plains section. West Street above Clinton was just a country road leading to Laurens and the hillsides where now are Hartwick College, Homer Folks Hospital and dozens of residences were meadow and pasture land. The forests along the ridge to the left contained hundreds of chestnut trees. After the first frost in the fall you could fill a flour sack with chestnuts in a few minutes. Much smaller and far sweeter than the Italian chestnut, the native variety was a treat indeed.

East Street followed the same pattern as West while the heights between, where the State College campus now is, was in part farm land but mostly a desolate waste of bushes and scrub timber. Only a few people, mostly farmers, lived on Southside.

Many of the residential streets look substantially as they did when we were a boy but there are differences. The front porch, a cherished institution of the past, is becoming extinct. New houses do not have them and the verandas have been taken off many of the older structures.

When we were a lad you could stroll down Walnut Street of a warm summer's evening and find nearly every householder and his family sitting on the front porch. Walk down a residential street now and you will hardly see a soul.

Another delightful but oftentimes obnoxious institution, the backyard, has vanished, at least as we knew it of old. The horse stable is now a garage, the kitchen garden is now a stone-paved patio and there is a fireplace where the ash and manure piles used to be. A dining table stands where the chicken run was of old and maybe there is a swimming pool tucked away somewhere.

Main Street is less quaint and more modern; less beautiful and more utilitarian. A tree is nice but a parking meter brings in more money and apparently that is what modern day living is all about.

There is something fascinating about an old newspaper, especially if it is your hometown journal and relates incidents of which you have recollection.

We have before us a copy of The Star dated Saturday, July 24, 1915, which is over a half century ago. Let's see who was doing what and which articles were being advertised and for how much.

World War I was raging in Europe and the Lusitania had been sunk not long before. With Germany constantly violating our rights on the high seas, it was becoming increasingly evident that sooner or later the United States would be drawn into the conflict but as yet there was little alarm among the people at large. Affairs in Oneonta were going on about as usual.

The issue contained long obituaries of two prominent Oneontans, George B. Shearer and R. Wesley Miller. The former was a member of the firm which laid the first pavement (of wood blocks) in Oneonta and he later ran a music store in the community for years. Wesley Miller was a partner in the lumber and contracting firm of Briggs & Miller and was a power in the Free (Main Street) Baptist church, which his ancestors had helped found.

There were announcements of church and society bake sales and 20 cent suppers and a column of personals from which you learned that the Misses Edith and Lulu Conrow spent yesterday in the city, that Dr. and Mrs. A.S. Barnes were spending a month at their cottage on Canadarago Lake and that O.C. McCrum had returned from New York where he had visited the Furniture Dealers exhibit, where he saw the finest in Morris chairs, mission tables and gas lamps with Welsbach burners.

The advertisements were intriguing. M.E. Wilder & Son was announcing its great annual Mill End sale where the housewife could buy a muslin handkerchief for one penny, a corset cover for 15 cents and a corset (with genuine whalebone) for a half a dollar.

Milady's husband could also find much of interest in the ads. Down at Herrieff's he could purchase an honest to goodness Palm Beach suit (with belted back) for \$8.00. He could get a straw boater at Spencer's for 50 cents or a real Panama for \$2.50. At Al Ingerham's Central Cigar Store he could exchange 50 cents for five Chancellor Invincible cigars and a genuine limp-leather cigar case. Perhaps of more interest to him was the fact that Terrell & Campbell were offering sirloin or porterhouse steak at 25 cents a pound.

If Mr. Man was earning from \$20 to \$25 a week and hence was really in the money, he might have been interested in an automobile. The Oneonta Sales Company was selling Ford runabouts at \$440, f.o.b. Detroit. These were guaranteed to cost not over two cents a mile for operation and maintenance.

The more affluent buyer could find at A.M. Butts' a Maxwell roadster at \$670 with electric starter and lighting system only \$55 extra. This beauty would actually hold the road at 50 miles per hour! Of course you had to supply the nerve to reach that speed.

We were in college then and believed that the world was our oyster. It turned out to be slightly tainted.

## DRUG STORES OF OLD

The words caught our glance as though they were outlined in fire: "GEORGE E. MOORE, PHARMACIST, 205 MAIN STREET, ONEONTA, N.Y." There in the window of the City Drug Store, amid a display of old druggists' tools, were two of our father's prescription books. We could see no dates but the prescriptions must have been pasted into the books at least 60 or 65 years ago.

As we looked there came to mind the pharmacists of old and the stores they ran. We thought not only of our father but of George Slade, Burt Gildersleeve and Tom Marsh; of Ralph McCune, Dr. M.L. Ford and Al Hutson; of A.D. Rowe, the Dickson brothers, Harry Disbrow, Ellsworth Scatchard and Ellery Shippey.

And then we thought of the differences time has wrought in the profession since our boyhood. Back in memory came the days when there were very few prepared medicines on drug store shelves and practically no merchandise on display that was not related to the healing arts.

Our father graduated from the Brooklyn College of Pharmacy in 1881 and after working in a Unadilla drugstore for a couple of years came to Oneonta in 1884 and started a store in the western half of the Union block, newly built by our grandfather, Merritt S. Roberts, and Alfred C. Lewis. After surviving several changes of ownership and location, that store became the City Drug Store.

In the old days every drugstore had a cigar counter which pushed the sale of locally made products. At one time Oneonta was a cigar making center which turned out about a million hand rolled smokes each month. Another universal feature was a soda fountain, with the carbonation, the ice cream and the syrups all made on the premises.

Toilet articles and preparations were sold and some stores carried artist supplies but little else, except liquor, was stocked that did not fit into the medical picture. Whiskey was once carried in bulk, with the druggist filling orders from a barrel.

The shelves were loaded with large bottles containing chemicals and the other liquid ingredients of prescriptions. Drawers beneath held the dry herbs and drugs, such as ipecac and mustard, camphor, acacia, senna and flowers of sulphur. There a small boy could find such goodies as cinnamon bark and licorice root.

The prescription department in the back of the store was where the pharmacist spent most of his time. Here he rolled pills, made tablets and filled prescriptions. It was also his workshop for the compounding of the nostrums which he had personally devised. Every druggist had a few of these.

The drugstore was the place where the men composing the "power structure" of the community gathered of a Sunday morning. We recall the big, circular register in Ford's store with its ring of chairs and with brass cuspidors within easy range. Here would congregate George Fairchild and George Baird, Mark Hemstreet and the three Charlies - Smith, Shelland and Bowdish, all of them big wigs in the Republican party. George I. Wilber would drop in on his way to church and Gene Card would ask him if he wanted change for a quarter for collection plate purposes. This so pleased the wealthy banker that he remembered the drug clerk in his will.

## THE U. & D. ARRIVES

The train wasn't due to arrive until 12:40 p.m. but people began flocking to the Ulster and Delaware terminal on Railroad Avenue as early as 10 o'clock on that hot morning of Sunday, July 15, 1900.

It wasn't just the novelty of seeing a steam train arrive that caused so many Oneontans to neglect their religious duties and delay their dinner hour. After all, trains had been running in and out of the Delaware and Hudson station for 35 years and people were accustomed to the sight, although it would never lose its appeal for many of them.

The attraction for the several hundred people was the fact that this was the first train into Oneonta on the Ulster and Delaware Railroad, which had at last reached the village after years of frustrating delay.

It was exactly 12:40 when No. 9 came to a stop as Engineer John Rothery eased back the throttle and applied the air, bringing the brake shoes against the steel tires. Harry Wood was the fireman and Thomas Kennedy was the conductor in charge of the train consisting of the locomotive and tender, two baggage cars and six coaches full of passengers. Scores of Oneontans had gone to West Davenport during the morning and boarded the train there for the historic trip.

Freight service had started the day before when a train of 12 box cars had brought in merchandise for Oneonta merchants and for transfer to the D.&H. The first outgoing freight was a wagon load of goods sent by the Oneonta Grocery Company to customers along the line.

Only the foundation of the freight and passenger station was finished and it would be some months before the structure could be used. In the meantime a dwelling near the tracks (since razed) was pressed into service and it was here that Stationmaster J. Sutherland presided.

Work on the Kingston end of the line was started in 1873 but it would be 27 years before the entire 108 miles of track were completed. The rails reached Stamford in 1874 and Hobart in 1886. Bloomville became the terminus in 1892. Eight years would elapse before sufficient money was raised to bring the line into the bustling metropolis of Oneonta.

The Ulster and Delaware thrived mightily until the motor car and the bus made their presence felt after World War I. There were six passenger trains each way a day and during the summer a solid Pullman train left Oneonta each morning and returned at night. For thousands of residents of New York City it was about the only way into the vacation spots of the Catskills.

Much of the stone for the sidewalks of New York and for its brown stone dwellings traveled over the road, as did most of the equipment and supplies for the big dams at Ashokan and Gilboa. An average of 20 cars of milk a day once passed over the line.

Transportation methods changed, however, and the U.&D. fell upon evil days. In 1932 it was put on the block and sold to the New York Central. The last passenger run was made in 1954 and last year the trackage from Oneonta to Bloomville was abandoned.

The DO Line bought a small part of the railroad and during the season you can hear again the hiss of escaping steam, the pleasant tones of the engine bell, the deep roar of the whistle and all the rest of the sounds so familiar and so satisfying to those who lived in the great Age of Steam.

## MAIN STREET CHANGES

We were walking along Main Street about 10:30 o'clock one Friday evening, zigzagging our way through groups of college students and town teenagers. As we passed the Youth Center we noticed that it was packed with kids, a few of them appearing to be not more than 12 or 13 years old.

At the moment we were thinking about a story concerning the Oneonta of 60 years ago, with the result that part of our mind was back in 1907 and what we were seeing in retrospect did not resemble at all what we were actually viewing in 1967.

We were a 12 year old youngster 60 years ago and it is very unlikely that we would have been on the street at 10:30 p.m. Had we been, however, what we would have seen would have been quite different from what met our gaze last week.

Hartwick College was unthought of in 1907 and there were only about 400 students at the State Normal School, most of them girls. There was nothing to attract them to Main Street that late in the evening. There were no movies and the stores closed at 9. There were drinking places to be sure but to be seen in one of them would have meant instant expulsion for a Normal student.

There were many youth centers but each of them was called "home" and that was where the teenagers were at 10:30 in the evening. And they weren't listening to radio or watching television, either, because those necessary adjuncts to modern living had not yet been invented. The kids were either reading, playing parlor games, or most probably, were in bed.

The old time saloons were not as genteel as their present day counterparts but their licenses were their most valuable possessions and they strictly obeyed the law. A teenager would not have gotten six feet inside the swinging doors before he would have been turned about and assisted outside at a speed approaching that of light.

The roadway would have been practically deserted. In 1904 there were about ten automobiles owned in Oneonta. In 1905 the Oneonta Herald said: "Two or three years ago an automobile was a novelty on the streets of Oneonta. Yesterday eight were seen on Main Street at one time." By 1907 there were 30 motor cars in the village but they were rarely driven at night, one reason being that the acetylene headlights were a confounded nuisance.

Although the roadway and the sidewalks would be practically deserted at 10:30 on our May evening in 1907, there would be some activity along the street. The big Central Hotel at the head of Broad and the Arlington Hotel in the Wooden Row would be pulsing with life. Light would be streaming from above and below the swinging doors of such bistros as Morton's cafe and Dell Kohn's saloon.

The candy and ice cream store of John Laskaris where the Youth Center is now would be open. Johnny Baker's restaurant in the Wooden Row would be well filled with business men who had congregated there for a nightcap and some conversation after they had closed their stores.

Main Street wasn't exactly a ghost thoroughfare during those evenings so long ago but it certainly wasn't the bustling and noisy place that it is today.

## A MERE TRIFLE

Eleven pearl necklaces valued at three and a half million dollars and a card bearing the name of Mrs. Arabella Huntington, widow of Collis P. Huntington, were in the handbag which a clerk found in a New York store. The wealthy dowager explained her carelessness by saying that she was on her way to buy eight million dollars worth of furnishings for her California home and that the weightier matter had made her temporarily forgetful of trifles.

It is a wonder this episode did not cause the financier's body to turn so violently in its grave that the marble mausoleum in Westchester Cemetery fell to pieces around it. Collis P. Huntington, who left Oneonta in 1849 to acquire fame and fortune in California was not exactly a miser. He was unexpectedly generous at times but he could never be called a spendthrift and there was usually a reason behind his few philanthropies.

In previous stories we outlined the spectacular story of this Oneontan who could travel from coast to coast over his own rails and held control over steamship lines, coal mines, vast timber lands, the huge shipyards at Newport News and thousands of acres of land in Southern California.

We told of how he was one of the organizers of the village of Oneonta and the captain of its first fire company, of the store on Main Street which he ran with his brother Solon and of how he went west in '49 and established a branch of the Oneonta store in Sacramento, California.

We sketched his subsequent career, telling how he and three other young men from small New York State towns - Charles Crocker of Troy, Mark Hopkins of Lockport and Leland Stanford from Watervliet - built the Central Pacific railroad and dominated the financial affairs of the West Coast.

What kind of man was Huntington? He evidently had some sentiment in his makeup for he never lost his love for Oneonta, visited here frequently and named his private cars "Oneonta I" and "Oneonta II". Sentiment, however was not a major facet of the character of this man whose name must appear upon any list of robber barons.

In 1938 the fascinating story of Huntington, Hopkins, Stanford and Crocker was told in a book called "The Big Four." This was not highly complimentary to its subjects and we recall that there was some local opposition to its appearance on the shelves of Huntington Memorial Library, which was the gift of Collis' nephew, Henry E. Huntington, a native Oneontan. This was in the day when people of Huntington blood were still living in the city.

The book's section on Collis Huntington begins: "A hard and cherry old man with no more soul than a shark." Thus, at the end of the century, Arthur McWen greeted Huntington's last visit to San Francisco."

One epigrammatist called him "scrupulously dishonest" and a newspaper in its story of his death said that he had always been "ruthless as a crocodile." He was often vilified in the press, as were other robber barons like Vanderbilt, Carnegie, Rockefeller, Harriman, Hill, Gould, Drew and Fisk, but the fact remains that he played a large part in drawing the nation together with bands of steel and in creating its industrial greatness.

Unscrupulous though his methods often were, Collis Potter Huntington was one of the architects of the greatness of America.

## URBAN RENEWAL IN 1853

The opening of Dietz Street in 1853 was the only public improvement Oneonta had experienced in a decade. It was then a small community of only about 600 inhabitants and had yet to know the problems which beset larger communities.

There was a spirit of expectancy and hope in the air, however. A contract for the construction of a railroad from Albany to Binghamton had just been let and citizens expected a boom period when the line reached Oneonta, which it would in 1865.

That was probably what induced the Dietz brothers to open a street through their farmland. They figured that the town would increase in size with a resultant need for housing and that they could sell lots along the street for a good price. Beyond doubt the same reasoning actuated Eliakim R. Ford when he opened Broad and Elm Streets and Ford Avenue a few years later.

Jacob Dietz came to Oneonta in 1812 and bought from Michael Sherman for \$1,000 a farm whose Main Street frontage extended from near the corner of Chestnut Street to just beyond where the Hotel Oneonta now stands. The land stretched to the north to just beyond Silver Creek.

Dietz built a fine home and a small store on the site of Bresee's and erected an ashery just off the bank across the street. He engaged in the mercantile, ash and lumbering businesses, being one of the big rafters of lumber down the river.

He died in 1831 at the age of 41. He had had dreams of converting the Susquehanna into a canal and of a railroad down the valley as well as of other transportation improvements but did not live to see the fruition of his hopes and plans.

Upon Dietz' death his property went to his two sons, Jacob, Jr. and Gould. In 1853 they opened a street through their property and offered building lots for sale. The curve near Main Street was necessary if the street were to meet Walnut on their land.

Jacob built a big residence on the corner of what is now Wall Street and lived there until he sold it in 1864 to Dr. Meigs Case. Its site is now a Bresee parking lot. Gould Dietz erected a home where Walnut now crosses. When the latter street was extended to Church in 1895 this house was moved and is now 6 Walnut Street. It was for years the home of Joseph S. Lunn and then of his son William.

When Dietz Street was first opened it extended only to Silver Creek, which was the boundary of the Dietz lands but it was soon pushed through to Center. The thoroughfare was first called Shanghai Street because one of its residents owned a flock of hens of that breed.

For some years a small frame building, the first floor of which was a marble shop, stood on the Main Street corner where the bank now is. On the second floor of this structure the present Masonic Lodge was organized in 1859. It was moved across the street and the brick Central Hotel was built on the site in 1875. This was destroyed in 1910 in one of Oneonta's worst fires. The present Hotel Oneonta was built on the site the following year.

## FIRST AUTO FATALITY

It was a warm May day and since there was little to do in Oneonta on a Sunday afternoon in 1907, two young lads, Collis H. Washburn and Edwin R. Moore, had decided upon a walk around town. They were gazing at an interesting display in the window of Arthur M. Butts' store on Main Street when a man touched Collis on the shoulder and asked if the boy had heard that his mother and grandmother had been injured in an automobile accident near the Chinese Wall.

The boys ran down Main and Chestnut Streets as fast as young legs could carry them. As they neared the great stone buttress which carries Chestnut Street along the hillside beyond West, they could see a crowd near the home of James O. Coy, where the wall began. Shouldering their way through the throng, they heard that one lady had been killed and the other injured and taken to the hospital.

They noticed a big gap in the wooden fence and when they had shoved their way to the sidewalk, they could see an automobile lying on its side at the foot of the wall 18 feet below and a blanket-covered form beside it. The body was that of Collis Washburn's grandmother, Mrs. E.S. Loveland, a niece of Collis P. Huntington, and the injured woman was his mother, Mrs. J.H. Bickford.

This was the first automobile fatality to occur in Oneonta and, we believe, the first in Otsego county. Motor cars were a rarity in Oneonta in 1907 and the few on the road were driven with caution and at the comparatively low rate of speed dictated by the nature of the vehicles themselves.

Mrs. Loveland was a daughter of one of the sisters of Collis P. Huntington, who had left Oneonta in 1849 to acquire fame and fortune in California as one of the country's great railroad builders. Upon his death in 1900, Mrs. Loveland had inherited a sum of money which in those days made her a wealthy woman.

She had purchased an electric runabout and had received some instruction in operating it, although evidently not enough. On this bright spring day she and her daughter, Mrs. Bickford, had gone for a spin in the new car. While attempting to turn around on Chestnut Street near the beginning of the Chinese Wall, she had evidently put the vehicle into forward gear instead of reverse and the car had mounted the curb, smashed through the fence and gone off the wall.

The two women were thrown out of the car. Mrs. Bickford was tossed clear of the machine and escaped with a sprained ankle and bruises while her mother fell to the ground, a distance of some 18 feet, and the car landed upon her, crushing her skull and breaking her back.

Mrs. Loveland lived on Dietz Street near the foot of Reynolds Avenue in the house now owned by Ronald Rowley. She had two daughters, Mrs. Frederick Watkeys who, with her husband, lived with her mother, and Mrs. May Sherwood Washburn, Bickford Abell.

At the time of his death Collis Huntington had two sisters, Mrs. Susan Porter and Mrs. Elizabeth Purdy, living in Oneonta as well as two nieces, Mrs. Loveland and Mrs. Edward H. Lewis, and a nephew, Edward H. Pardee, who built the beautiful Colliscroft, on Southside now owned by Dr. Millard Roberts, former president of Parsons College.

Considerable inheritance money went to them and to his sister-in-law, Mrs. Solon Huntington who lived in the house which is now Huntington Library. No person of this line of Huntingtons now lives in Oneonta.

## A MAN OF INDEPENDENCE

Probably the most independent person who ever lived was the farmer of begone days. Come hell, high water or change of administration he had a roof over his head, clothes on his back and an abundance of food in his larder. He was holden to no man and could speak and act according to the dictates of his conscience.

He paid his taxes, and that was a problem since cash money was scarce, but he expected little from government and that is exactly what he got. He felt that law and order should be preserved and his children given a primary education at public expense. The thought of the poorhouse over the hill was of dubious comfort to him but otherwise he wanted to make his own way without help.

The feeling of independence which he cherished so highly did not descend like manna from heaven but was bought with long hours of hard toil but that was the normal way of life and he neither knew nor wanted any other.

Let's go back to the years before the Civil War and take a look at the life of a typical Otsego or Delaware county farmer. The acres which he tilled had been cleared of timber through his efforts or those of his forebears. He had built his home himself from lumber which he had personally cut with assistance only in the raising of the frames. The plow with which he broke the soil had been made in a nearby foundry and the rest of his tools had in all likelihood been fashioned by the local blacksmith.

His wife did her cooking over an open fireplace flanked by Dutch ovens built into a masonry wall. He "raised" the clothing for himself and family. Wool from his own sheep was spun into thread by the women folk and woven into cloth on a hand loom or in one of the woolen mills close at hand.

Linen for sheets, shirts and underclothing came from flax grown on the farm which, after the difficult job of hetcheling, had been spun into thread on the family wheel and woven either at home or at a nearby mill.

Shoes came from the backs of the farmer's own cows and calves. The hides were taken to a nearby tannery (there was one in about every township in the old days) and exchanged for tanned leather which a traveling shoemaker would fashion into shoes for the entire family.

At that time both right and left shoes were made on the same last. The cobbler would whittle one out of a maple block for the father and then cut it down for the mother and for the successively smaller children.

Food was no problem (except one of labor) for the old time farmer. He took his wheat, rye, corn and buckwheat to the nearest gristmill and had it ground into flour from which his wife made the bread, rolls, pie crust and johnny cake. There was beef, veal, lamb and pork on the hoof and plenty of chickens, ducks and geese. The farmer did his own slaughtering and dressing, smoked his hams and bacon and made his sausage.

There were fruits and berries in abundance and the back pantry was always loaded with jams, jellies, preserves and pickles. The farmer grew and cured the tobacco for himself and his wife (clay pipe smoking was common among women at one time) and exchanged grain at one of the many distilleries for whiskey.

The farmer had not yet been forced to exchange his birthright for a mess of pottage and the life he led, although toilsome, was complete and satisfying.

## HORSE AND BUGGY DAYS

The Horse and Buggy Era has disappeared down the road of history but there are many who remember it with affection and with perhaps a covert longing to be back in its days of comparative peace and tranquility. It was a good era and an important one for during it the foundations were laid upon which our present prosperity has been built.

The age of the horse and buggy began about 1850 and lasted to approximately 1910, by which time the motor car had commenced to leave its indelible mark upon the country. Between those years the horse and buggy had relatively as great an effect upon the economy of the country as the automobile has today.

Tens of thousands of people were employed in the manufacture of wagons of various kinds and in the creation of harness and the myriad other objects connected with either the horse or the buggy. In those days the use of the horse for short haul transportation was universal and there was hardly a cross roads hamlet in the land that did not have a blacksmith shop and a place where vehicles and harness were repaired.

The buggy was only one of dozens of different kinds of passenger conveyances. There were barouches, broughams, phaetons and landaus; sulkies, surreys and rockaways; coupes and coaches. These were made in hundreds of factories, ranging from the big ones in Amesbury, Mass., Concord, N.H. and New Haven, Conn., to small concerns in towns all over the country. There was a carriage factory for years on the southwest corner of Main and Market Streets in Oneonta. Most of the work was done by hand and the vehicles were extremely durable.

Hartford, Conn. was the center of the harness making trade but here again there were small shops throughout the land. At one time there were half a dozen places in Oneonta where harness was repaired or made to order. And there there were all kinds of accessories. There were whips of many sorts and various kinds of bits, including single and double snaffles, military and steel curb. There was winter horse clothing, knee caps, ear nets; neck, flank and body nets, rollers, surcings, blinkers, collars and interfering boots.

Other accessories were brushes and curry combs, saddles, riding bridles, martingales, pole straps, halters and sleighbells, not to mention lap robes and foot warmers. Whips seem a minor accessory but at one time twenty million of them were produced annually in Westfield, Mass., which produced about 90 percent of the country's supply. In 1900 there were 40 firms in Westfield engaged in making whips, whip accessories and whip making machines.

Blacksmith shops, where horses and oxen were shod, were everywhere, there being 15 at one time in Oneonta. There had to be "filling stations", places where hay, straw and oats could be purchased. The farmer grew his own horse fodder but the city dweller had to rely upon the neighborhood feed dealer.

The livery stable was an indispensable part of the horse and buggy economy. It was the "U Drive It" company and the taxi stand; it was the parking lot for those coming into town to shop and the storage garage for horse owners who had no barn; it furnished rigs for weddings and funerals and it supplied the horses for the volunteer fire companies.

When you become disillusioned by the speed and complications of the age of the motor car, think back to the slow, simple, blessed Eden of the horse and buggy era.





# In Old Oneonta



Vol. 6, 1970

EDWIN R. MOORE

ARMAND S. LA POTIN

In  
Old  
Oneonta

GENEALOGY DEPARTMENT

*Edwin R. Moore*



Vol. 6, 1970

EDWIN R. MOORE

In recording Oneonta's past, Ed Moore is singly performing a valuable service to our community.

His writings and painstaking research are building blocks to the future of Oneonta. As our community passes through time, this foundation becomes increasingly important.

His writings which appear regularly in the Oneonta Star and were compiled in his five previous volumes, will prove to be interesting reference sources for future generations of Oneontans. Ed Moore deserves our salute for a job well done.

Mayor James Lettis  
City of Oneonta

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Since coming to the Oneonta area in 1946, we have known Ed Moore as a devoted historian and prolific writer, a staunch American Legionnaire and as a good friend.

We are honored to have this opportunity to publish the next in Ed's series of books. Although this particular one is smaller than Volume 5 which we did last year, Volume 6 recalls pictorially some Oneonta nostalgia worthy of your personal bookshelf.

Inasmuch as the first four volumes are virtually out of print, and only ten copies still remain of Volume 5, we will, if the demand indicates, reprint all five previous volumes at a later date.

**Ed Dorr  
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### THE HATHAWAY HOUSE

A one story frame structure at the corner of Broad and Prospect Streets is all that remains of the big Hathaway House which dispensed hospitality for nearly three-quarters of a century.

The Albany and Susquehanna Railroad, now the Delaware and Hudson, reached Oneonta in 1865 and in that year Eliakim R. Ford opened Broad Street through his lands to provide ready access to the depot. That same year Leonard Hathaway built the big hotel which bore his name through a long succession of landlords.

The hotel ceased operations in the late 1930s and since then has been gradually demolished until only a small portion now remains.



### MAIN STREET VIADUCT

There was no great celebration when the Main Street viaduct was opened on August 15, 1904, but a party of village officials and businessmen did take the first trip over it in a stagecoach from the Central Livery with Arthur Coy holding the reins.

The viaduct has been a part of the Oneonta scene so long that it seems incredible that for almost 40 years after the railroad was built pedestrians and vehicles had to use a dangerous grade crossing.

It is difficult to visualize the lay of the land before the viaduct was built. Today Main Street slopes gradually from Chestnut down to Market Street where the slight upward pitch to the viaduct begins. In the old days a much steeper decline began in front of the Eagles Club and the street ran all the way down hill to the tracks. Fairview Street was much steeper than at present and Market Street came into Main about on grade.

There were frequent near misses, several accidents and an occasional fatality on the crossing. Work was started on the viaduct on December 30, 1902, and the construction took nearly two years. Two workmen were fatally injured while one of the 65-ton girders was being raised into place.

The final cost, including land damages, was somewhat in excess of \$175,000. One-half of the cost was borne by the railroad, one-quarter by the State and one-quarter by the village, which also had to pave the dirt approaches.



### THE AGE OF STEAM

The Delaware and Hudson Railroad station at the foot of Broad Street was a busy place back in the Age of Steam as this picture, taken about 1910, indicates. There were six passenger trains a day in each direction and they were generally crowded.

You will note the beautiful lawn with the word "Oneonta" spelled with flowers. The D. & H. took great pride in the appearance of their passenger stations and had a big greenhouse down in the yards which supplied flowers and shrubs to embellish the stations along the line. For years each train coming into the Oneonta station was met by an employee with a large tray of cut flowers for distribution to the lady passengers.



Main St. Cor. Dietz, as it was in 1874, Oneonta, N. Y.

### SHADYSIDE

To the Oneontans of a generation ago the term "Shadyside" meant the big hotel of dubious reputation which stood for years on the corner of Chestnut and Oneida Streets but to those of the generation before it signified the expanse of tree studded lawn covering approximately the site of Bresee's.

This picture, taken in 1874, of the corner of Dietz and Main shows this area. The block on the corner, which is still standing, is the oldest brick structure in the city, being erected in 1865 by George Z. Saunders and William D. Bissell. Next to it was the frame dwelling of Mr. Bissell and beyond that the residence and extensive lawns of Mrs. L. L. Bundy. This was the area known as "Shadyside" and here were held ice cream festivals and other social affairs. The house was moved back in 1895 and a four-story brick block was erected by Edward E. and Dr. Merton L. Ford. This is now occupied by Bresee's.

Beyond that stood the oldest building on Main Street, a stone store built before 1840 by Roderick J. Emmons. It has been remodeled and enlarged several times and still stands. For years it housed the City Drug Store and has recently been altered for use as a bar and grille. The old Susquehanna House can be seen beyond, on the corner of Chestnut.



### BROAD STREET IN 1873

There is absolutely nothing in this picture, taken in 1873, to indicate to a present day Oneontan that it is a portion of Broad Street that is depicted. None of the buildings shown is now standing.

The building in the right foreground was the cooper shop of Wickham and Pierce. The big white structure farther down the street was built by E. R. Ford soon after he opened Broad Street in 1865. There was a store on the first floor while upstairs was a large assembly room called "Ford Hall" where entertainments were held.

The structure in the left foreground was once a distillery and originally stood on the other side of the street. The YMCA later occupied the site of this building. Beyond it can be seen the old Hathaway House, called the Eagle Hotel when this picture was taken.

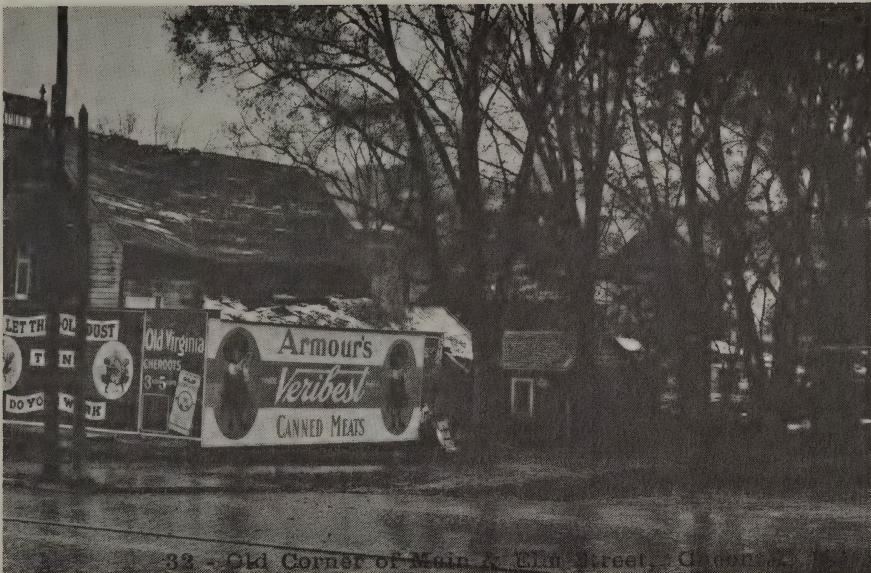
The railroad station was then several rods east of its later location at the foot of Broad and is hidden from view in this photograph. The "x" indicates where newly opened Mechanic Street (later called Market) came into Broad.



### IT'S NOT THE SAME TODAY

This frame structure of one story on the Main Street level and two in the rear which stood where the old postoffice is on the corner of Main and South Main Streets, was built in 1870 by Hiram J. Brewer and Jay McDonald on the site of Brewer's cooperage shop which was moved to the corner of Main and Elm Streets. They used the upper floor as a carpenter shop and sawmill while the lower floor was occupied by Tourgee and Allen and used for planing and matching and for grinding feed.

Brewer and McDonald were succeeded by Wright and Barnes, Doolittle and Petrie, Briggs and Miller and N. H. Briggs and Son. The latter firm moved to new quarters on Hickory Street in 1908. At the time the picture was taken just before the building was razed in 1914 it was occupied by a vulcanizing outfit and by a tailor who did cleaning and pressing.



### BUTTERMILK PARK

This is a rare picture of the corner of Main and Elm Streets as it looked over a half century ago. We do not know just when the picture was taken but it was prior to 1915 and, as the bill posters indicate, was in the days when Armour's Veribest Canned Meats were in vogue, when Old Virginia Cheroots were three for a nickel and when the Gold Dust Twins were going strong.

The delapidated building which the billboards flank stood partly over Silver Creek and was once the cooper shop of Harvey Barnes. His residence was on the back of the lot and was about north of the obtuse angle forming the corner of Elm Street.

In 1905 the Oneonta Milk Company built a plant on the eastern side of the lot. The building is now occupied by the Urban Renewal Agency. Between it and the creek was an area of lawn and large trees which was dubbed Buttermilk Park.



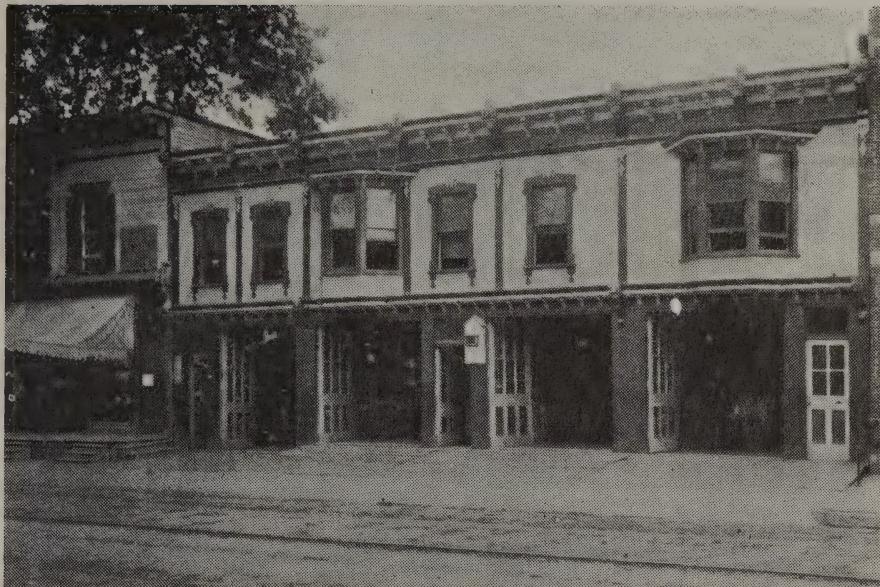
### THE WALLING MANSION

This 20 room brick house stood for over three-quarters of a century on the present corner of Main Street and Walling Avenue where the United Presbyterian church is today.

The site is an historic one. In 1784 Simeon Walling, a New Englander who had fought in the Revolution, made a clearing there and built a log tavern. In 1808 he replaced this with a frame structure. In this tavern the first Masonic Lodge in the town (chartered in 1814) held its meetings. Simeon died in 1829 and his son Joseph became the proprietor. In 1854 he built this brick mansion, using parts of the frame tavern as annexes on the east and to the rear.

Joseph died in 1867 and his son, J. R. L. Walling, farmer and surveyor, inherited the property. The village was growing fast and the Walling farm, which stretched from the river to the hill back of East Street, was right in the path of progress. J. R. L. made himself a wealthy man by laying out streets and selling lots. He died in 1892. His widow, born Alevia Yager, resided in the east wing until her death in 1927. She is said to have doubled the family fortune.

The building was the first home of Hartwick College when it was founded in 1928. In 1930 the property was sold to the United Presbyterian Church and the venerable mansion was razed.



### THE VILLAGE HALL

This two story wooden structure on the site of the present Municipal Building not only housed the fire apparatus but served as headquarters for the village government. The building was erected in three sections: the central part in 1876 to house the newly purchased steam fire engine, the eastern part in 1879 and the western portion in 1885.

A bad fire on May 22, 1906, destroyed the Wilber National Bank building on the corner of Main and South Main Streets and several others to the west. The village trustees ordered the fire department building razed to create a fire break. The action proved to be unnecessary as the flames never got that far. Work was started immediately on the present Municipal Building.

At the time of the blaze the fire department consisted of the following units: the Colonel William Snow Steamer Company, the A. L. Kellogg Hook and Ladder Company, the Wilber Hose Company and the Lewis Chemical Company.



#### WALNUT STREET FROM DIETZ

This rare picture shows Walnut Street as it looked from Dietz, where it ended, in 1874. The house in middle left is on the corner of Walnut and Ford. The building on the right was built by David M. Miller, a dealer in wool and hops, as a storehouse. It was later converted into a dwelling and was for years the home of Frank H. Herrieff. It still stands at 26 Walnut. The street was opened from Dietz to Church in 1895.



### THE COOPERSTOWN AND CHARLOTTE VALLEY

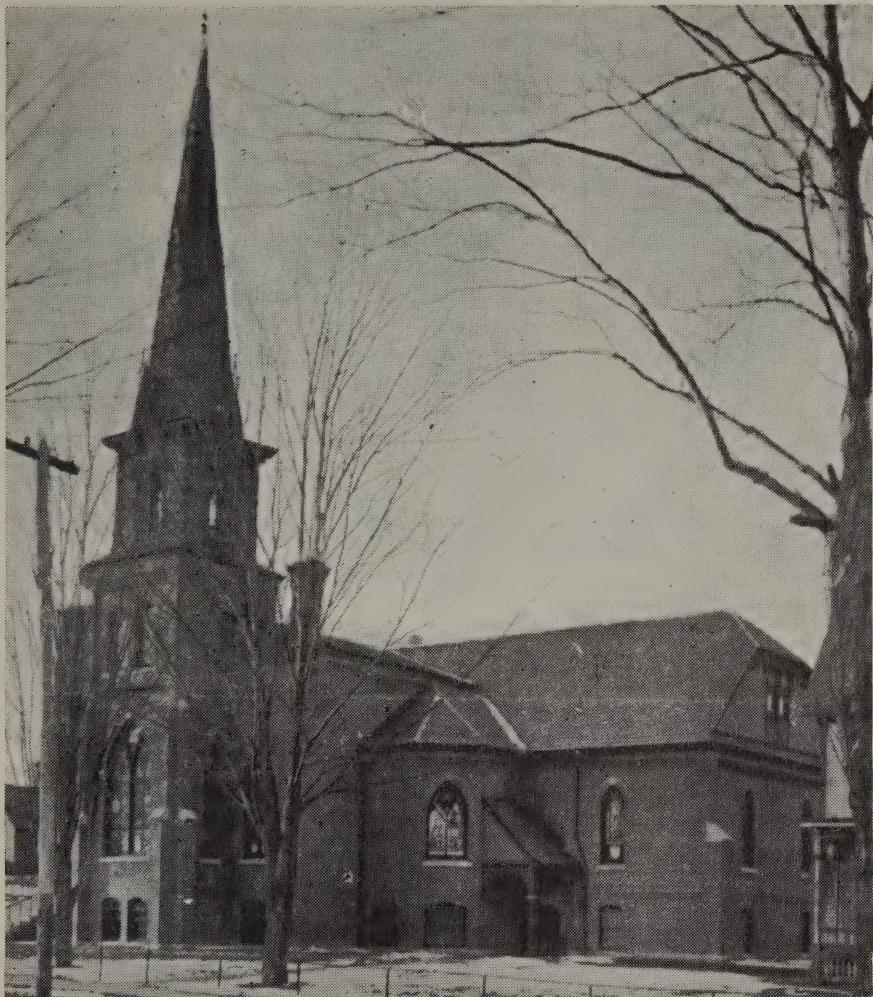
This picture was not taken in Old Oneonta but the locale is familiar to most residents of the city and vicinity. Every time you traverse Route 7 between Colliersville and Cooperstown Junction you go between the stone buttresses shown in the photograph. They are all that remain of the trestle which once carried the Cooperstown and Charlotte Valley Railroad over the highway and the Delaware and Hudson.

The C. & C. V. started in 1869 as the Cooperstown and Susquehanna Valley Railroad, connecting the county seat with the D. & H. at Cooperstown Junction. In 1867 the line was pushed to Davenport Center. It was intended to extend it up the Charlotte Valley but the plans never came to fruition. In 1903 the Delaware and Hudson acquired control of the road and closed the Junction to Davenport Center section but continued the Cooperstown run. The trestle was not demolished until after World War I.



#### A CIRCUS PARADE

This picture shows a circus parade wending its way down Main Street some time in the early 1920s. The frame building on the right was the undertaking parlor of O. Clark McCrum. It was built by William McCrum in 1853 as a cabinet shop and furniture store. Hoffman's now occupies the site. Next to it was the Townsend Hardware Store, now a part of Sears'. Behind it was a square building then occupied by William H. Hoffman's dry cleaning and pressing establishment. It was built in 1876 and was long the home and office of Dr. H. A. Hamilton.



### THE METHODIST CHURCH

Standing on the site of the present First United Methodist Church, this big brick church structure was a familiar sight to several generations of Oneontans. It was razed in 1925 when work on the present building was commenced.

Methodism began in Oneonta in 1830 but a church was not erected until 1849 when a plot of land covering the present church site and extending along Church Street to about opposite High, was purchased for \$80. A small wooden church was built on the back end of the lot but facing Chestnut Street. In 1869 a larger wooden church was erected where the present edifice is. In 1886 this was greatly enlarged. The building was raised to provide a basement for the use of the Sunday School and large wings were built on either side. The whole structure was then veneered with brick. This is the building in the picture.



### WILBER BANK BLOCK

This brick building stood for 18 years where South Main Street now meets Main. At that time South Main came up where the western portion of the old postoffice stands.

For years, beginning in the 1860s, the site was occupied by a marble business, first run by Stephen Gile and Company and later by Isaac Lauder. In 1887 the property was purchased by David Wilber and Son who erected a four story brick building to house the Wilber National Bank. The block was destroyed by fire on the morning of May 22, 1906.

Following the fire the site was sold to the village and South Main Street was changed to it from its former course.

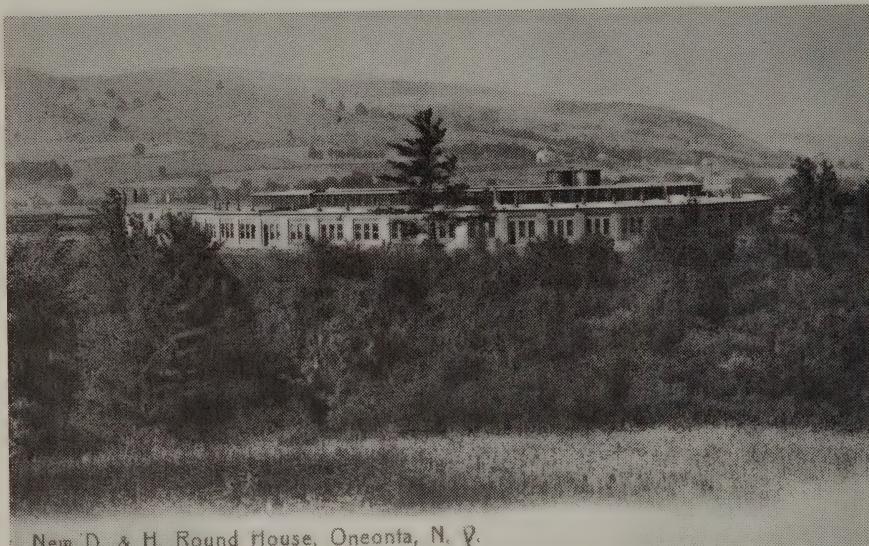


Main St., Cor. Dietz St., as it was in 1854. Site of the Central Hotel Block, Oneonta, N. Y.

#### WHERE THE BANK IS NOW

The corner of Main and Dietz Streets where the National Commercial Bank is today, looked like this in 1854. The building shown was used as a marble shop by John F. Perkins. On the second floor the present Oneonta Masonic Lodge was organized in 1857. When the Central Hotel was built in 1873 the building was moved across Main Street where it stood next to the stone store of Eliakim R. Ford until it was destroyed in the big fire of 1881.

To the right of the marble shop can be seen part of a frame house which stood opposite the end of what is now Broad Street. It was built by Roderick J. Emmons and was for many years the home of Dewitt Ford, eldest son of E. R. Ford. When the Central Hotel was built the house was moved back on Dietz Street about where the entrance to the Wilber Bank parking lot is. For some years it was the Russell Conservatory of Music.



New D & H Round House, Oneonta, N. Y.

### BIGGEST IN THE WORLD

When the Delaware and Hudson roundhouse shown here was finished in 1924 it was the largest in the world, with 54 stalls and a turntable 104 feet in diameter. The D. & H. had a world wide reputation as a pioneer in the development of steam locomotives and some of the largest and most powerful engines ever built were lodged and repaired in this roundhouse. The railroad became completely dieselized in 1953 and most of the roundhouse was razed, only a few stalls being left for storage purposes.

Elm Park, Base Ball Grounds, Oneonta, N. Y.



#### THE FIRST BALL PARK

This is how the present Damaschke Field in Neahwa Park looked during the first decade of the century when it was called Elm Park. Until it was opened in 1905 Oneonta ball teams played on the Fair Grounds. The wooden grandstand shown in the picture was replaced in 1939 by the present steel structure.

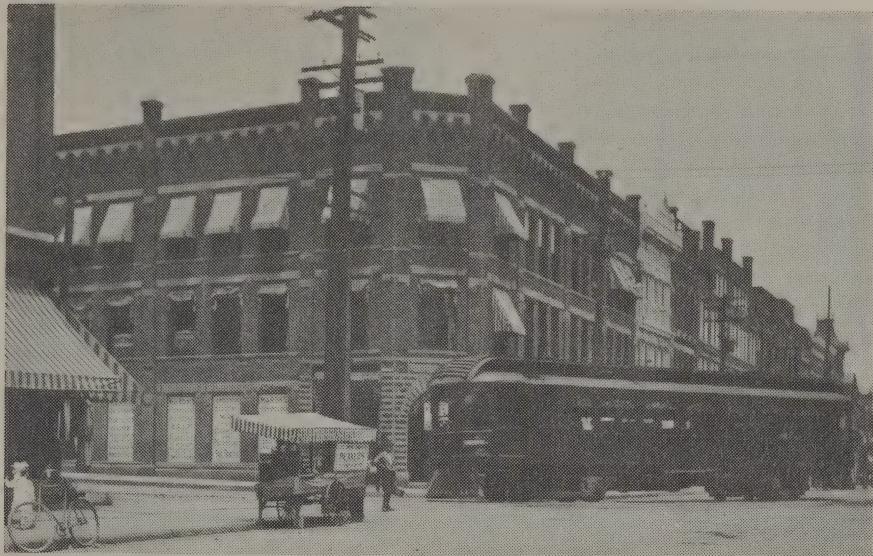


#### DOWN BY THE OLD MILL STREAM

This picture, taken in 1890, is of the old Elwell gristmill which stood on perhaps the most famous site in Oneonta. Around here is where it all began.

About 1780 John Vanderwerker, who in 1775 had erected the first dwelling in what is now Oneonta, built a gristmill on the Susquehanna about forty yards southwest of the unused mill which now stands near the foot of the Main Street viaduct. In 1803 Joseph McDonald bought the mill, dismantled it and used some of the parts to build a sawmill on the banks of Silver Creek, which then took a much different course than it does at present. In 1804 James McDonald bought the mill of his brother and added a gristmill and a wool carding and cloth finishing plant. The hamlet of Milfordville, which became Oneonta, grew up around the McDonald Mills.

The gristmill was operated by a succession of proprietors, including Maurice Elwell, who ran it for over forty years. The mill at the foot of the viaduct, operated for many years by the Elmore family, is on the site of the Elwell Mill shown in the picture. Mill wheels have not turned there since 1965 but prior to then they had been in continuous operation for 150 years.



### INTERURBAN ELECTRIC RAILROAD

This view of the corner of Main and Chestnut Streets, taken a half century or more ago, shows one of the big interurban passenger cars which made the run from Oneonta to Herkimer.

The electric trolley line connecting the Susquehanna and Mohawk valleys had its inception with the Oneonta and Otego Valley Railroad, organized in 1897 to furnish passenger service between various parts of Oneonta and to West Oneonta. In 1899 the little railroad encountered serious financial trouble and service was suspended for three months. Herbert T. Jennings, a New York capitalist, bailed the company out and in 1900 launched a scheme to lay rails northward to the Mohawk valley with a branch line from Index to Cooperstown. The road was completed to Mohawk in 1904 and arrangements were made to use the New York Central tracks into Herkimer.

The freight and passenger business done by this small road with less than 60 miles of tracks was amazing. At one time, including the freight trips and the milk runs, a total of 100 trains operated daily over the line in addition to the runs over the streets of Oneonta.

The line could not compete with the growing popularity of the automobile, however. The East End and Normal lines in Oneonta were abandoned in 1923 and in 1931 a terminal was built near Oneida Street and the interurban line stopped running into the city. Passenger service ended in 1933 and freight service in 1941, leaving only the short line from the D. & H. to West Oneonta.



23—Central Hotel, Oneonta, N. Y.

### THE CENTRAL HOTEL

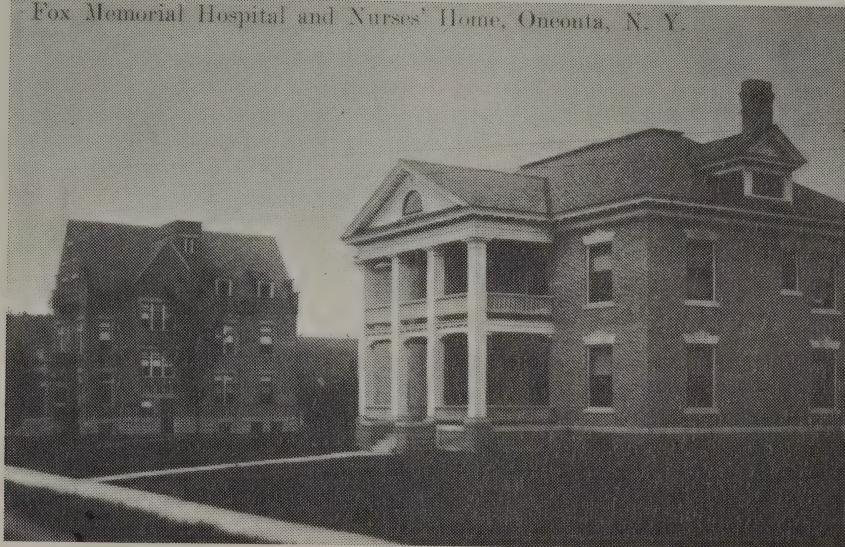
From the day it opened its doors in 1873 until it was destroyed by fire in 1910 the Central Hotel was THE hostelry in Oneonta. The Windsor boasted an elevator and other modern features but the Central was where most of the drummers stayed and where the fanciest banquets were held.

The building, which stood where the Hotel Oneonta block is today, was erected by Alfred C. Lewis. At the time of the fire the hotel lobby, the bar and the dining room and kitchen occupied the eastern end of the first floor while the western section was occupied by the First National Bank, Herrieff's Clothes Shop, the National Express Company and Ingerham's Barber Shop. The upper floors throughout the building were occupied by hotel rooms.

The fire which destroyed it broke out early in the morning of January 16, 1910. Below zero temperature hampered the firemen and made the night one of horror for the 54 registered guests who, plus the hotel employees who slept in, were forced to flee in their night clothing. A hotel worker and two men guests perished in the blaze.

Work was immediately started on the building which now occupies the site. It was finished in 1911.

Fox Memorial Hospital and Nurses' Home, Oneonta, N. Y.



#### NURSES' HOME

This picture shows the original Fox Memorial Hospital and the Nurses' Home. The hospital was built in 1900-01 while the Nurses' Home was erected in 1911. The hospital had a training school for nurses and the students and the resident nurses lived in the Home. The training school was discontinued in 1923.

In 1918 a small addition was built on the east side of the hospital and in 1934 this was extended to connect with the Nurses' Home. In 1941 the Home was converted into an annex to the hospital. It was razed when a large addition to the hospital was started in 1956.



RESIDENCE OF G.B. BAIRD (44)

ONEONTA, N.Y.

#### RESIDENCE OF GEORGE B. BAIRD

When it was built in 1890 the residence of George B. Baird on the corner of Chestnut and Church Streets was the largest and most elegant dwelling in the village of Oneonta. In later years Mr. Baird built a large garage in back with a ballroom on the second floor, a place well known to the young men and women of our generation.

On this site, until it was razed when Mr. Baird bought the property, stood the home of Collis P. Huntington where he lived until he went to California in 1849 and where his mother and his sisters resided for some years.

In 1929 Mr. Baird sold the property to a group of Oneonta physicians and it was known as the Physicians Building for some years. It was razed when the Loblaw store was built about a decade ago.



#### HOME OF D. F. WILBER

From 1883 until 1922 this big brick residence stood on the corner of Main Street and Ford Avenue where is now the new section of the Wilber National Bank.

The house was built by David Forrest Wilber, hop merchant, promoter, Congressman, United States consulor official and a brother of George I. Wilber. It stood on the site of the farmhouse of Frederick M. Brown whose large farm was later bought by Eliakim Reed Ford. For some years the house was occupied by the Oneonta City Club. It was razed in 1922 and the Palace Theatre was built on the site.

To the left can be seen the Ford Stone Mansion while on the right is the residence of E. Reed Ford, E. R. Ford's youngest son. The building of Samson Floors now occupies the site.

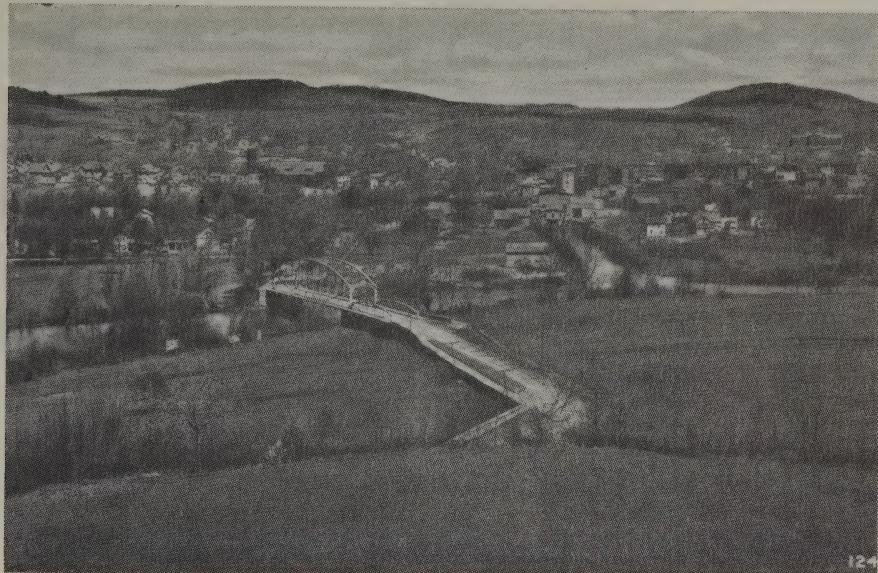


### ELECTRIC LAKE

This is Electric Lake, a body of water which most present day Oneontans never saw. There was a time however, when it was a pleasant part of Oneonta's scenery and a necessary part of its economy.

Until about fifteen years ago the New York Electric and Gas Corporation had a combination hydro and steam power generating plant near the foot of Rose Avenue and the pond back of the dam called Electric Lake. Here for half a century Oneonta youths swam, boated and fished. There was some skating in the winter but ice harvesting operations prevented that activity much of the time. There has been no water in the lake for a decade and a half and the site presents a desolate view in sharp contrast to the pleasant aspect which it once had.

In 1954 the power company discontinued operations at this plant. The water wheel was dismantled and the dam gates removed. Today only a few small stagnant pools remain of what was once a fifty acre expanse of shining water.



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#### A MARVEL OF ENGINEERING

This shows the old Main Street bridge and the Fairchild flats as it looked before the present bridge was built in 1933. The old bridge was built in 1888 and replaced a two pier covered wooden bridge. When the bridge shown was built it was regarded as one of the marvels of this part of the state. During the 128 days it took to construct it vehicular traffic was routed over the lower river bridge. Pedestrians could cross the stream for five cents on a ferry operated by Delos (Trapper) Watkins.



### A TEMPLE OF LEARNING

Several generations of Oneonta boys and girls received primary and secondary education in this building which stood on Academy Street where the Junior High School now is. The building housed eight grades and a high school department and for some kids it was the only school they ever attended.

The center portion of the school was built in 1868 while the western wing was added in 1875 and the eastern in 1880. The building was razed in 1907 when work was started on the new High School building, now a part of the Junior High School complex.



### THE CENTRAL NEW YORK FAIR

For over half a century the Central New York Fair, held annually in September on the area now embraced by Belmont Circle, played an important part in the life of Oneonta, having much the same impact upon the community's economy that the Christmas season has today.

This picture, taken sometime during the first decade of the century, gives a general view of the area inside the half mile track. The big structure in the foreground was the barn where the trotting horses were quartered. The huge grandstand is out of the picture to the left.

The Oneonta Union Agricultural Society was organized in 1873 and the first fair was held the next year. The last exhibition was held in 1926. The Oneonta Fair, as it was popularly known, was the pride of Banker George I. Wilber and State Senator Walter L. Brown and they made it second in size and importance only to the State Fair. It was always held the week following the State Fair and hence drew many of the exhibits and amusement features which had been at Syracuse.



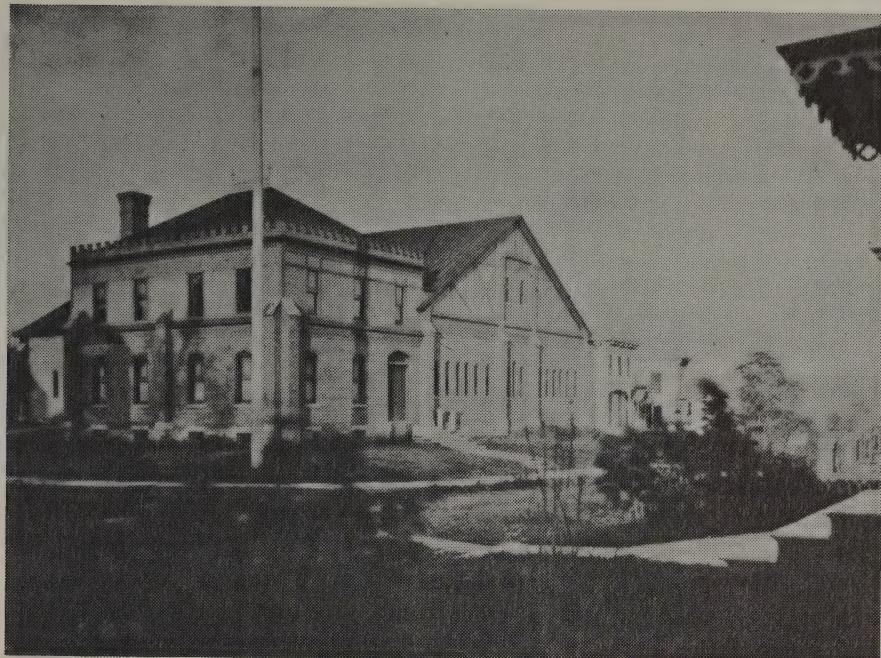
### FORD STONE MANSION

For ninety years the Ford Stone Mansion stood on the site of the older portion of the Wilber National Bank and was a conspicuous landmark in this part of the Susquehanna valley. Not until it was razed in 1929 was it realized what a remarkable structure it was.

In 1838, Eliakim R. Ford, the leading citizen of Oneonta for years, bought the Frederick Brown farm and commenced the erection of the house which was to be the family home for four decades. The house, which stood back from the street on a slight eminence, had solid stone walls, twenty inches thick, from cellar to roof. The frame was of hand hewn hill pine timbers, some of them 12 x 14 inches in size. All of the heavy timers were mortised and pegged together with oak dowels. The roof was of tin imported from England.

There were four massive chimneys and each room of any size had a fireplace. The kitchen and dining room were in the basement as were a dairy room where butter was churned and food storage rooms. Below the basement was a small sub-cellars where milk and other perishable foods were kept. Water was furnished by a large spring which is now in the basement of the Penny store. The water was at first pumped to the house by a water wheel which was later replaced by two hydraulic rams.

Prior to the Civil War the house was a station on the famous Underground Railroad by which escaped slaves were taken to Canada and freedom. The dwelling was never modernized and neither gas nor electricity was ever installed. No members of the Ford family had lived in it for some years prior to the time it was demolished to make room for the bank building.



### ONEONTA'S FIRST ARMORY

With the exception of the ten years immediately following the Civil War Oneonta has had a unit of the militia or the National Guard continuously since 1812. The outfits met in various places during the years, having no permanent home until this brick and frame building was erected in 1885 at a cost of \$9,000. The National Guard unit was then known as the Third Separate Company. It was from this Armory that the unit departed in June of 1898 to serve in Hawaii as Company G, 1st New York Volunteer Infantry. The building was on the same site as the present Armory but faced Fairview Street.

In 1904 the structure was razed and construction of the present Armory, which faces Academy Street, was started. The cost of this building was \$62,500.

During most of the time the unit was an infantry company with a proud record in four wars. During the Civil War it was Company K of the 76th New York, a regiment which participated in most of the great battles of the conflict and whose losses were staggering. During World War I it was Company G, 107th Infantry, 27th Division. The 107th helped smash the Hindenburg Line and had the dubious distinction of suffering more casualties in a single day, September 29, 1918, than any other regiment during the entire war. During World War II the outfit, as Company G, 106th Infantry, 27th Division, fought on Pelieu, Eniwetok, Saipan and Okinawa and suffered heavy losses.



Main St. Cor. Chestnut St., as it was in 1860, Site of the Baird Block, Oneonta, N. Y.

#### CHESTNUT AND MAIN

When this picture was taken in 1860 the two big hotels on the opposite corners on Main and Chesnut Streets relied largely upon stagecoach passengers for their patronage.

The hostelry on the far corner was the Oneonta House, which had its beginnings in 1808 when a tavern was built on Main Street near the corner of Chestnut. This was enlarged through the years until it occupied the entire corner. In this hotel, in 1848, was held the meeting which resulted in the incorporation of the village of Oneonta. The meeting which started the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad, now the D. & H., on its way was held here in 1851 and when the road reached Oneonta in 1865 the celebration banquet was held in the hostelry. The building was razed in 1873 when the Stanton Opera House block, demolished in 1970, was built.

The hotel on the near corner was the Susquehanna House which had its beginnings in 1835 when Roderick and Carleton Emmons bought a frame house which stood on the site and converted it into a tavern. In 1843 the building was enlarged, another story added and tall columns put on the Main Street front. The hotel was razed when the present brick block on the site was built in 1892.

The one story building to the left of the Oneonta House was the blacksmith shop of John Amsden. It was later considerably altered and it survived until 1970 when it was demolished by urban renewal. The last occupant was the Roberts Jewelry store.



### ONEONTA'S PLAYHOUSE

This is the Oneonta Theatre as it looked in about 1910. The first archway covered a road leading to the stage door while the second one led into the lobby. The wooden structure just beyond the theatre was the old Fritts house, built in 1830. The Dentists' building now occupies the site. In this house was born, in 1838, Charles Edgar Fritts, a crippled genius whose principal invention made possible the talking motion picture, the tape recorder and much of television. He was the first man to photograph sound, record it, transmit it electrically and then translate the photograph back into its original sound.

The Oneonta Theatre was built in 1897 by Willard E. Yager. Its first lessor was W. H. Fitzgerald who paid \$1500 a year rental. It was opened on January 31, 1898, with Madame Modjeska playing the lead role in "The Sporting Duchess". For years it was a legitimate theatre hosting one night stands and stock companies. Many famous actors and actresses have trod its boards. About 1913 it began to show movies between visits of legitimate shows. Two or three vaudeville acts were shown with the pictures, with the bill changed twice a week....and all for one thin dime.

In 1921 the theatre was extensively remodeled and the road opening was closed. There have been alterations several times since.



Main Street, Oneonta, N.Y., before fire, Dec. 27, 1908

### THE WOODEN ROW

The jumble of buildings of assorted sizes which constituted the Wooden Row on the south side of Main Street in the area now occupied by the yellow brick blocks was a conspicuous part of Oneonta's architectural setup for many years. It disappeared early in the morning of December 27, 1908, when fire destroyed eight buildings, put twelve concerns out of business and made ten families homeless. On the good side the blaze leveled 194 feet of wooden structures which had been an eyesore and a firetrap for years.

Several landmarks went up in flames. The most westerly building in the Row was the stone store built in 1840 by Collis and Solon Huntington. In later years a wooden addition was built on the rear. At the time of the fire Morton's saloon was on the ground floor. The three story Arlington Hotel had 24 people sleeping in it but all escaped. On the top floor of the Blend block, also of three stories, was Blend Hall where the Catholics of the village met before St. Mary's parish was organized.

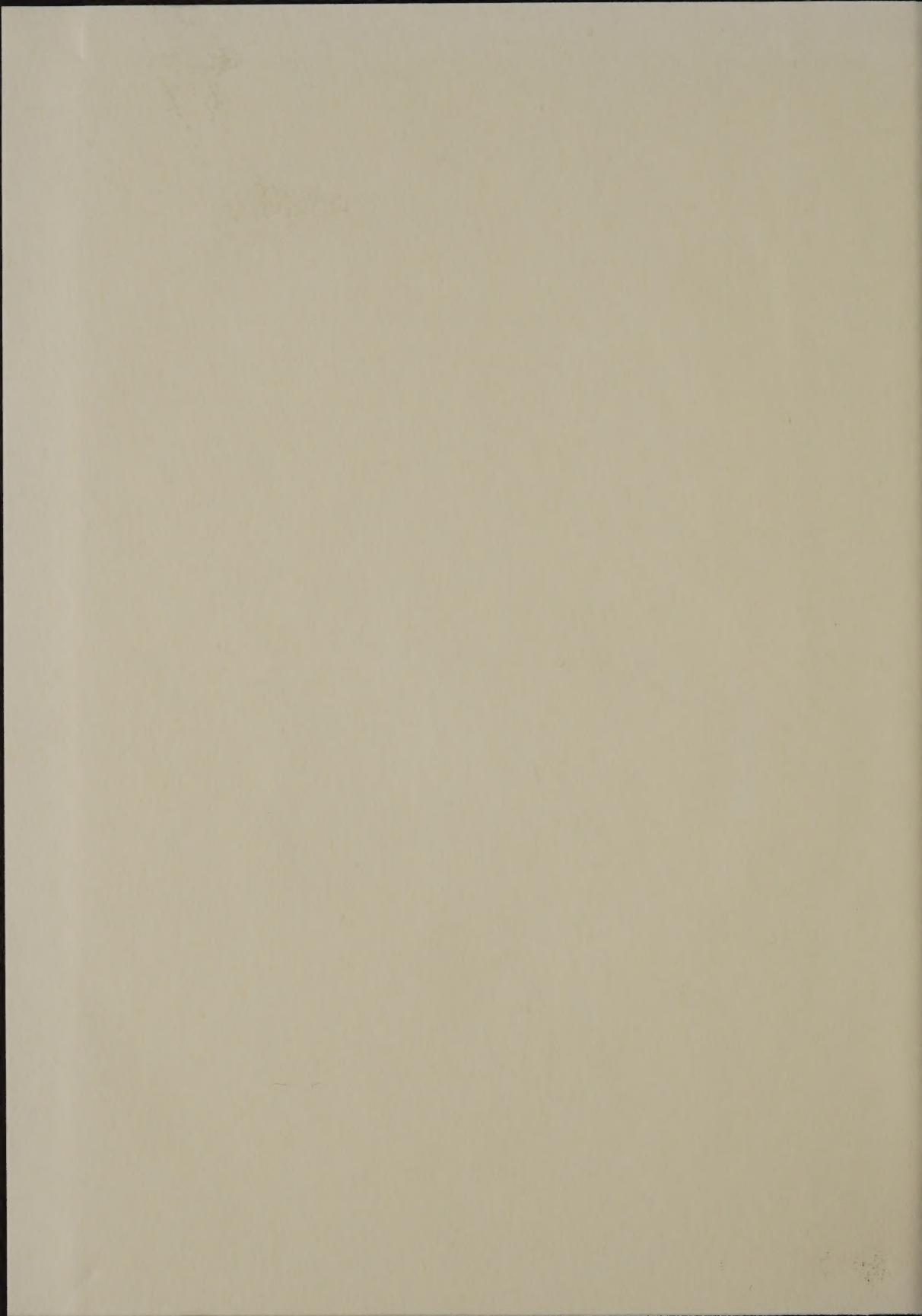
One of the buildings housed the Grand Army of the Republic and many priceless records and mementoes belonging to the Civil War veterans were lost. Another landmark destroyed was the restaurant of T. J. (Johnny) Baker, widely known for the quality of its food and drink. This was a favorite haunt of Oneonta business and professional men.

The automobiles shown in the picture contained veterans of the 121st New York Infantry, a famous Civil War unit which was having a reunion in Oneonta.









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